NUMBER TWO WINTER 1978 · $2.50

Fanfare

THE MOVIE POSTER ART OF
FRANK FRAZETTA
Featuring
BATTLESTAR GALACTICA

Film Noir and Comic Books
Groucho and Us
Roots Country Style
Lost in Space

Whatever Happened To The Golddiggers?

The Lord of the Rings
From J.R.R. Tolkien to Ralph Bakshi

Remaking INVASION OF THE BODY SNATCHERS

The original 1956 *Invasion of the Body Snatchers,* with its mix of film noir, horror and science fiction in a small town setting, triggered an immediate audience response in similar small towns across the nation. One tale I recall from the late Fifties happened shortly after the film opened at the local theater in Hattiesburg, Mississippi, where it was seen by students from Mississippi Southern College (now the University of Southern Mississippi). This incident had *Animal House* overtones: one MSC student reacted so squeamishly to the scenes of the greenhouse pods, with their duplicate humans, that his classmates thought he would be the fit subject for a gag. While several kept him occupied at a bar, buying him drinks, the other pranksters acquired a watermelon and put it in the victim's bed. Later that night he crawled between the sheets in the dark, rolled against the chilled watermelon and ran screaming into the night—not returning to his dorm room for the next two days.

The 1956 film, based on the novel *The Body Snatchers* by Jack Finney, gained considerable power through its use of the pods as a metaphor. There are "people who are essentially pods," said director Don Siegel. "Many of my associates are pods, people who have no feeling of love or emotion, who simply exist, breathe and sleep."

The 1978 *Invasion of the Body Snatchers* began shooting in color on location in San Francisco on October 31, 1977. In 49 days the principal photography was completed. Director Philip Kaufman feels it is not so much a remake or sequel as it is "another version of that theme." Don Siegel appears in a cameo role (a cab driver) in the new film, as does Kevin McCarthy (who starred in the black-and-white original). In the new screenplay by W.D. Richter, McCarthy becomes the first victim of the green, all-engulfing pods which spread rapidly after spores send a disease through the city water supply. Kaufman calls it an "organic invasion," and he has played down the horror approach, leaning more toward science fiction and several ideas of current relevance. As a director, Kaufman made his mark with the 1963 fantasy *Goldstein* which featured the prophet Elijah (Lou Gilbert) rising from the waters of Lake Michigan to wander the streets of Chicago. Jean Renoir called *Goldstein* "the best American film I have seen in 20 years." In 1971 Kaufman directed *The Great Northfield Minnesota Raid* in the classic Western tradition, followed by *The White Dawn* (1974), starring Warren Oates and a cast of subtitled Eskimoes. Then, for almost a year, Kaufman worked with production illustrator Ralph McQuarrie, designer Ken Adam and executive producer Jerry Isenberg on the planning of Paramount's *Star Trek* motion picture, but the project was temporarily shelved

(Continued on inside back cover)

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THE MAGAZINE OF POPULAR CULTURE AND THE ARTS

CONTENTS

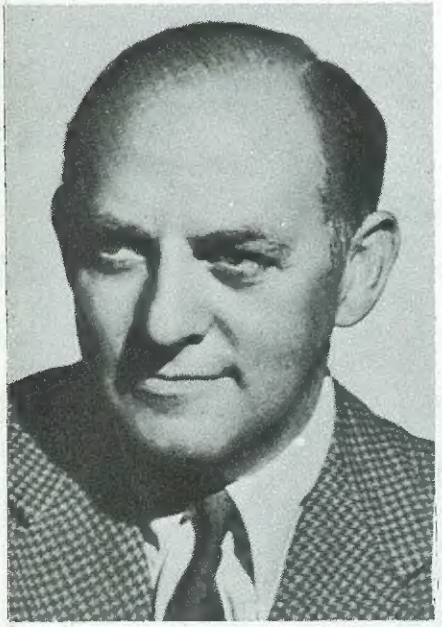
SHORT SUBJECTS · From Here, There and Everywhere	2
FILM NOIR AND COMIC BOOKS · Carl Macek	8
WHATEVER HAPPENED TO THE GOLDDIGGERS? · William Munger	16
THE MAGIC OF MIDDLE-EARTH · Bernie Zuber	22
FREELANCING · Clay Geerdes	28
THE MOVIE POSTER ART OF FRANK FRAZETTA · William Stout	32
GROUCHO AND US · Mark Evanier	43
ROOTS COUNTRY STYLE · Fred Walker	48
LOST IN SPACE · Samuel Maronie	53
FANFARE FORUM · Editorial and Reader Correspondence	58

FANFARE Number 2, Winter 1978. Published three or four times yearly at 329 North Avenue 66, Los Angeles, California 90042 USA. Phone 213 255-1958. Bill Spicer, publisher; Bill Spicer and Mark Evanier, editors. SUBSCRIPTIONS: 4 issues for $10.00, singles copies $2.50. Dealer discount rates available on request. Inquire within. WRITER, ARTIST AND PHOTOGRAPHER SUBMISSIONS: Always invited, as per Fanfare Forum editorial on page 58, though please be advised that we can accept responsibility for return of material only if accompanied by the obligatory stamped, self-addressed envelope. ADVERTISING: Write for information on rates, size and copy specifications in both black & white and 4-color. This is the second issue in a row we've had no room for ads, much to our unending chagrin, but there *will* be pages available the next time around, including the back cover (4-color) and inside covers (black & white). Guaranteed minimum circulation 10,000, and rising dramatically each issue. Reserve your ad space now or be forever sorry you didn't. LASTLY: Entire editorial contents and packaging of *Fanfare* No. 2 © 1979 William W. Spicer.

Short Subjects

THREE GREAT ANECDOTES ABOUT HARRY COHN

Harry Cohn was the founder/president of Columbia Pictures and one of the most colorful of the film moguls. He was an earthy man who made life either Valhalla or Hades for his employees as the mood and their worth suited him. There are a zillion anecdotes about him, many probably apocryphal. Here are three . . .



1. Cohn called his writers in one day, furious. He had just paged through the script of their upcoming period drama, set in the year 1200 A.D. Cohn berated the writers for sloppy research. "Maybe I never went to college like you sons of bitches but I sure as hell know they didn't say 'yes, sirree' back when this picture takes place." The writers looked at the script and then at one another, trying to figure which of them would have the intestinal fortitude to tell Cohn that the line in question was "Yes, sire."

2. The esteemed screenwriter Herman J. Mankiewicz was seated at the Columbia executive dining table the day Cohn said, "I have a foolproof device for knowing how good a picture is. If my fanny squirms while I'm watching, it's a bad movie. If not, it's a good movie. My fanny knows exactly what the public will think of it." Mankiewicz immediately announced, "Imagine that! The whole world is wired to Harry Cohn's ass!" Mr. Mankiewicz was immediately fired.

3. Eddie Buzzell was one of the directors of Columbia's short subjects. At a preview of one of Buzzell's films, the director anxiously awaited Cohn's comments on the work — but Cohn remained silent. Their party left the theatre and was walking towards a restaurant when they were all witness to the suicide of a wino. The tattered man dove from a high ledge onto the pavement as all present watched in horror. "Why would a man do such a thing?" Buzzell asked. Cohn answered: "He must have seen your film."

AND ONE ABOUT ORSON WELLES

When Welles was making **The Lady From Shanghai** at Columbia, he fought a running battle with Jack Fier who functioned as Production Manager. The battle was wholly about money. Welles loved to spend and Fier's job was to see that Welles did not spend or, if he did, that he didn't spend too much. Finally, relations grew so hostile that Welles had a large sign posted on the set. It read: "We Have Nothing to Fear But Fier Himself."

The next day, when he arrived, Welles discovered that Fier had had his own sign painted. It read: "All's Well That Ends Welles."

Fanfare Predicts You Will Read This:

No one expects a psychic to be 100% accurate. You expect a psychic to be 80%, maybe 70% accurate. The thing that makes him or her a psychic, of course, is that he or she is correct more often than an average person, right? Wrong. A number of long-range research projects on psychics are now concluding and almost every one shows that people who claim to be psychics are **worse** guessers than average folk and by a rather large margin.

Elvis Presley was a favorite subject for America's seers and, for the calendar year 1977, they made in excess of two hundred different predictions about Elvis involving his sex-life, his career, his physical appearance, his arrest record and his financial status. Not one single psychic predicted his death. However, many psychics predicted Groucho Marx's death which is not much of a trick when you consider (a) that Groucho was in his mid-eighties, (b) that Groucho was in and out of the hospital for the last few years and (c) that most of these psychics had predicted Groucho's death every year for the last ten or so. They were bound to be right eventually.

Perhaps the most interesting survey is one made by Los Angeles radio talk show personality Hilly Rose. Rose kept a running tally on the accuracy rate of two dozen noted psychics (the ones who turn up in those papers sold at supermarket check-outs) as opposed to the accuracy rates of Rose's phone-in listeners making wild guesses. The average listener guesses proved to be right about 25% of the time; no psychic scored higher than 5% and that's even with granting them such "easy" predictions as Groucho's passing and vague visions like, "There will be a terrible air crash in the mid-West."

PROFESSOR'S PLANTS PROCLAIM PROPER PRACTICES FOR PEOPLE

Professor Nordius N. Nurnum, after reading in *Fanfare* No. 1 that acid rock music retarded the growth of plants and therefore was bad for humans, set about conducting a series of his own experiments with plants, in order to discover what was good or bad for humans to do.

"We humans often just don't know what to do," stated Professor Nurnum. "We can find out what to do by watching plants. Plants tell us what to do."

In one experiment with two identical nasturtiums, Professor Nurnum fed one nasturtium small quantities of the average American diet: coffee, pizza, french fries, peanut butter, Big Macs, Colonel Sanders Fried chicken, apple pie, hot dogs, Hostess Twinkies, milk, diet cola, uncola, beer, and bourbon. He fed the other nasturtium liquid fertilizer. In six weeks the fertilizer-fed nasturtium was six feet tall, but the other was nowhere to be found.

"We humans need to consume much larger quantities of liquid fertilizer than we presently do," concluded Professor Nurnum.

In another experiment, Professor Nurnum placed one begonia on his window sill and another in his closet. After seeing the results of this experiment, Professor Nurnum began spending most of his time on the window sill. "But not with the window open," explained Professor Nurnum, who lives in a 17th floor apartment. "Two begonia plants disappeared while the window was open, and I feel there may be a correlation here which is applicable to us humans."

Among Professor Nurnum's other findings are that it is better for humans to remain with their feet rooted in soil than to use them for walking; that we should not usually wear clothing; that the cutting off of selected arms and legs in the fall will promote a better quality of growth the following spring; and that old people should be dried out for at least a year before they are used as firewood.

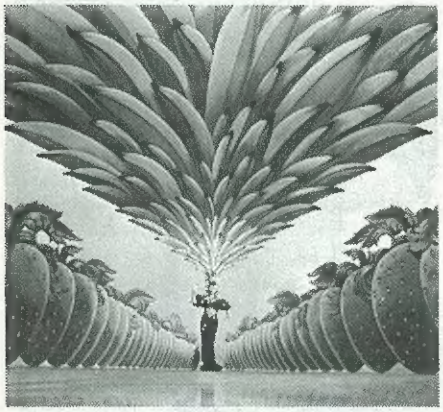
His latest experiment involves the reproductive system of plants. The Professor was not prepared to issue a statement on how this applies to humans, but mentioned that his wife and he were having certain difficulties adjusting to the use of a beehive in their bedroom.

— Monte Wolverton

PROFESSOR NURNUM PRUNING HIMSELF

Mob Forces Mayor to Eat Bananas

COACALCO, Mex. (UPI)—A rock-throwing crowd of nearly 4,000, enraged at the police shooting of a workman, stormed the town hall, seized Mayor Jose Ramon del Cueto and forced him to eat 12 pounds of bananas, authorities reported. Cueto then was forced to sign his own resignation.



Los Angeles Times, May 18th 1978

POPEYE'S COMEBACK

Popeye, one of the most venerable of cartoon creations, is making his comeback via Hanna-Barbera Productions' 16 hourlong shows entitled *The New Popeye Hour* for CBS-TV, airing in the 8-9 Saturday a.m. slot. These are the first Popeye cartoons produced since 1962, and will feature the almost-original voice of the popular sailor man, Jack Mercer, who first began those famous mumblings in 1934 with the Max Fleischer studio, creators of the animated two-reelers.

Although Popeye made his entrance in a guest-shot appearance in a Betty Boop cartoon in 1931, he didn't rate his own 11-minute short until 1933. It took 25 years for Fleischer to turn out the first 234 Popeye cartoons, but only two years for King Features Syndicate, through Larry Harmon productions, to make another 220 in the late 1950s and early '60s.

Harmon's product featured limited animation, and Hanna-Barbera v.p. in charge of special projects Art Scott says the studio is returning to the original concept. We're trying for some sort of compromise between current network standards and the old Popeye standards," Scott explains. H-B is getting roughly $90,000 for a half-hour of animated material from CBS, and Scott, who is producing and recording director for the new batch of shorts, says his costs are running 10-20% over that. "The current budget is better than what they spent in the '60s, but nothing like what was spent on the Fleischer originals."

There are other problems with updating Popeye, too. "The original series was born in a violent era when prizefighting was a national craze," Scott notes. "Popeye and Bluto would really slug it out. We can't have people punching each other, so we have to find other ways of showing competition."

Network anti-violence strictures are so tough, Scott continued, that Popeye can't even roll up his sleeves, let alone make a threatening gesture and follow through. What does that do to the age-old rivalry between Popeye and Bluto over Olive Oyl?

"It makes it awfully hard on the writers," Scott admits.

TWO DRINK MINIMUM PER PERSON

I thought of the jazz club: tired gladiators speaking in mysteriously cool and subtle languages, solos passed around with languid nods like old men telling stories, squeezing a last thrill out of an almost forgotten memory. A steel note sounds and you are embraced by the scent of the night.

When I peeled off a dead president and crept past the belligerent grimaces of the out-of or off-work musicians clutching Michelobs, I was thinking about the last seat at the bar. I could tell it was a good seat because it was right next to the cash register, the cigarette machine, the pay telephone, the pong game, the extra folding chairs, and in a direct path to the ladies room. I ordered a domestic beer and planned to suck it over a few sets. The bartender gave me a look like I just shaved his cat and threw my change on the bar. Far off in the distance I heard music.

The tempo is up. Strength and endurance blasting out through glazed expressions, the eyes deep and motionless, the soul and brain capturing a breath to the horn. The notes echo away, the story is told, applause. The saxophonist lights a smoke and thinks of Walker red on the rocks.

I noticed the guy next to me was collecting martinis and starting to take the shape of a large, oozing olive dripping off the chair. He turned and spoke: "Nuthin' like a jazz club." I nodded and went back to the piano solo. Suddenly, each chorus was enhanced by low gutteral moans, indenting the poor pianist's crafted solo with alcoholic stomach spasms. I turned and asked the barman if he thinks the guy is sick. All I got was an expression that reminded me of cod liver oil. "No I don't want another beer." I turned around but the groaner had disappeared, escaping to the mens room to splash out his crescendo on porcelain ears.

The jazz club is an eerie exercise in controlled environment. The ceiling is so low the stucco offers visions of dandruff. With the players gathering for the second set there is a glistening anticipation among the audience; the chatter dies and the music starts.

I spy a table. I dream of attentive and appreciative listeners, calm clappers, and lazy-eyed blondes tapping perfect time with demure toes. "I'll have another," I say to the waitress with the personality of an inflate-a-date. Now the cash register sounds faint as if blocks away. I sit sublime in a black vinyl fog, bathed in the warmth of the saxophone spelling out a breathy ballad. The music has arrived.

A few tables over we have a singer, who will hopefully never make it to a stage. The noisy starlet looked like an 8 x 10 glossy laying on the bottom of some producer's reject file. Her voice wasn't all that bad; it only made you wish you were deaf. I kindly ask her to shut up, but that does little good. I could ask a waitress to quiet her down, but their tab was too high; they were drinking champagne that was older than I was. I tried a subtle approach, writing on a "Two Drink Minimum" card: "You sing lousy. Please for the sake of the musicians, shut up!" That got me a dirty look from her date. I had noticed he had been giving them away all night. His name might have been Carte Blanche De Ville. The musicians cast a sorry look her way and went back to work on a *BLUES OUT* to end the set. The eight bar breaks were evenly distributed, the drums ushered in the coda, and the final notes were spent with great zest, signaling the end of another night of music.

As I drained my beer, the waitress brought me a card. It was from the singer and read, "Thanks." It was signed something "St. John." I looked over and she smiled and waved. I wanted to write her another nasty note, but I thought she would get too excited . . . and it was two a.m.

On my way out I came neck and neck with the martini inspector. He gives me a stupid smile and slurred, "Ain't nuthin' like a jazz club!" I sneered and looked for my wallet.

—John Breckow

Before

HAIR LOSS?

GET IMMEDIATE RELIEF WITH

MUTANTS OF THE METROPOLIS

After

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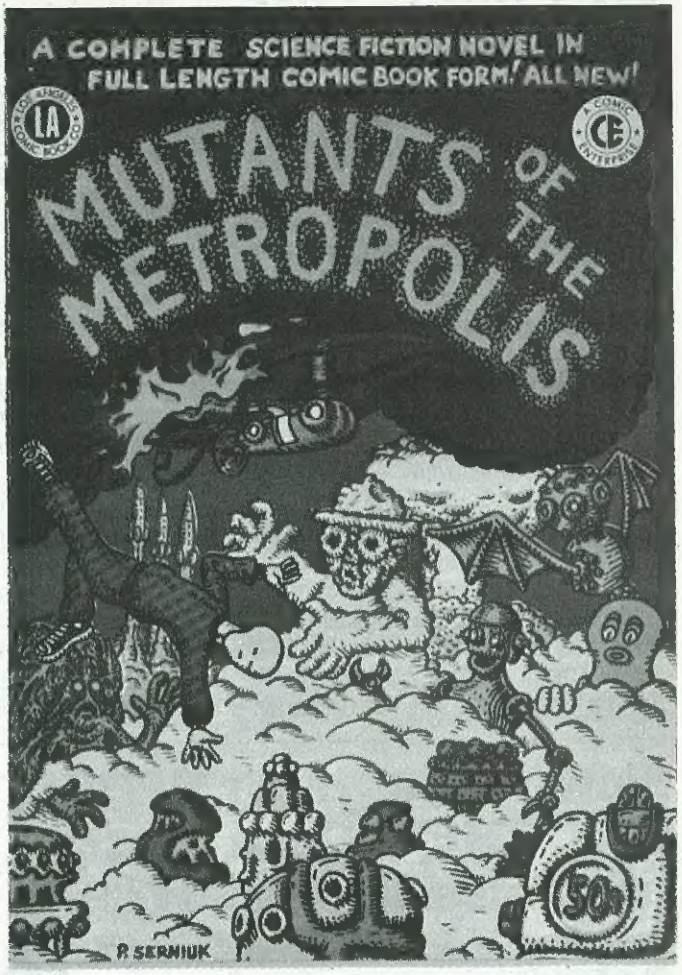

GRAPHIC STORY MAGAZINE Number 16 · $1.50

And...
Mark Evanier and John Pound: **THE WISHING WORLD**
Basil Wolverton: **BERSERK BURK THE HOTEL CLERK**
George Metzger: **ROUTINE**
Bob Powell: **COLORAMA**

YOU ASKED FOR IT--

By popular demand we offer the only available back issue of FANFARE's predecessor, GRAPHIC STORY MAGAZINE—No. 16, published in 1974, the final edition under that title and format. With full color front and back covers and 48 pages, this issue continued GSM's long tradition of showcasing the finest in strips, interviews, articles and features dealing with comics. Bhob Stewart's in-depth interview with Howard Nostrand establishes and explores the link between Harvey Comics and EC during the early fifties; included are vintage photos of EC horror artist Graham Ingels, the first to be published anywhere in over 20 years—plus the fine EC science fiction parody, "The Wishing World." Another first appearance is Basil Wolverton's "Berserk Burk" strip; and George Metzger, one of the leading underground comix artists, presents a wholly-visual 11-page graphic story, "Routine." All this and more in No. 16 for the original cover price of $1.50, plus 50c postage. DEALER'S RATES: Due to limited supply (just a few hundred remain) we can accept only one order per customer, 20 copies minimum to 50 copies maximum at $1.00 each, postage paid. A scarce issue, out of circulation for three years, so order yours now from FANFARE (address above) while they last.

WHY MAGAZINE WRITERS GET MIGRAINES

In preparing this issue's piece about The Golddiggers, author Bill Munger thought it would be nice to obtain a photo of the current Golddiggers line-up. True, they don't do much except tour and pop up as camouflage on intermittent Dean Martin Specials, but there is a current Golddiggers troupe. So, the writer phoned the NBC Publicity folks and asked for a still or two—only to be told that the Golddiggers were long since disbanded, defunct and demised. The author protested that the Golddiggers were presently appearing in Las Vegas and were scheduled to appear on the then-forthcoming Dean Martin Christmas Special. But the lady at NBC said no; Golddiggers had gone the way of the Passenger Pigeon. A call to the firm that handles publicity for the Greg Garrison company only yielded the suggestion to call NBC and when our correspondent said, "But they don't believe the Golddiggers exist," the P.R. man said, "Just a second," and then put him on hold for the next 43 minutes.

Mark Evanier, who wrote this issue's Groucho piece, spent three hours on the phone one day, trying to track down a still from when Groucho visited the "Welcome Back, Kotter" set. This is a long, highly-surreal tale wherein Mark involved several dozen ABC executives, several officers of the company that produces "Kotter," a few members of the cast, the firm that handles Public Relations for "Kotter," plus the folks who were producing the authorized "Welcome Back, Kotter" comic book. None of these people could get any stills from the network. In a future **Fanfare,** Mark may tell the circuitous story of how ABC has figured out a way to make certain that the only people who can get stills from "Kotter" are fan magazines that need them to illustrate articles on Gabe Kaplan's secret baby/transplant/abortion/marriage/or Bar Mitzvah.

The 2-pager on **Invasion of the Body Snatchers** was going to have bios taken from United Artists' press kit, said press kits presumably being designed for publicity purposes prior to a film's release. While **Body Snatchers** stills and slides were available well in advance, for which UA is to be commended, the press kit containing text material arrived from New York only 10 days before the film's release on December 22—barely in time for newspapers, perhaps, but useless for most magazines, including this one. Writer Robert Stewart had to consult other sources to research his own bios.

Lastly, there was going to be a real nice plug in this column for a recent Crown International movie. But four phone calls to the Crown offices, and four promises of the stills being sent out post haste, yielded nothing.

Now, really...isn't PEDRO AND THE PUTZ a pretty good idea for a show?

In the movie **Network,** Faye Dunaway played the indefatigable programming czar of a mythic TV network. Throughout the film, there are occasional glimpses of their programming board—for which someone had to invent the names of various fictitious shows on the United Broadcasting System. The board clearly shows the name of the UBS program that catapults them into TV contention: **The Howard Beale Show,** airing Monday through Friday from 7:30 to 8:30 in flagrant violation of the FCC prime time access rules. And the board, if you look closely, also shows several other UBS shows: **Celebrity Canasta** and **Celebrity Mah-Jhong, The Grand Guignol, Holy Mackerel, Pedro and the Putz, Shirley, Two Plus Two, The Death Squad, The Wilsons, The Young Shysters, Bad Lands,** various night movies and, of course, everyone's favorite: **The Poco Poco Show.** Silly titles, maybe—but wouldn't you say the same thing if they'd made up names like: **Me and the Chimp, The Montefuscos, My Mother, the Car, Who's Watching the Kids?, Makin' It, Delvecchio** or **What's Happenin'?**

ALL SHOOK UP

. . . The Washington Post reports that an internal FBI memorandum, which the newspaper obtained under the Freedom of Information Act, reveals that Elvis Presley once offered his services to the FBI. Presley (according to the 1970 memo) "advised that the Smothers Bros., Jane Fonda and other persons in the entertainment industry of their ilk have a lot to answer for in the hereafter for the way they have poisoned young minds by disparaging the U.S. in public statements and unsavory activities."

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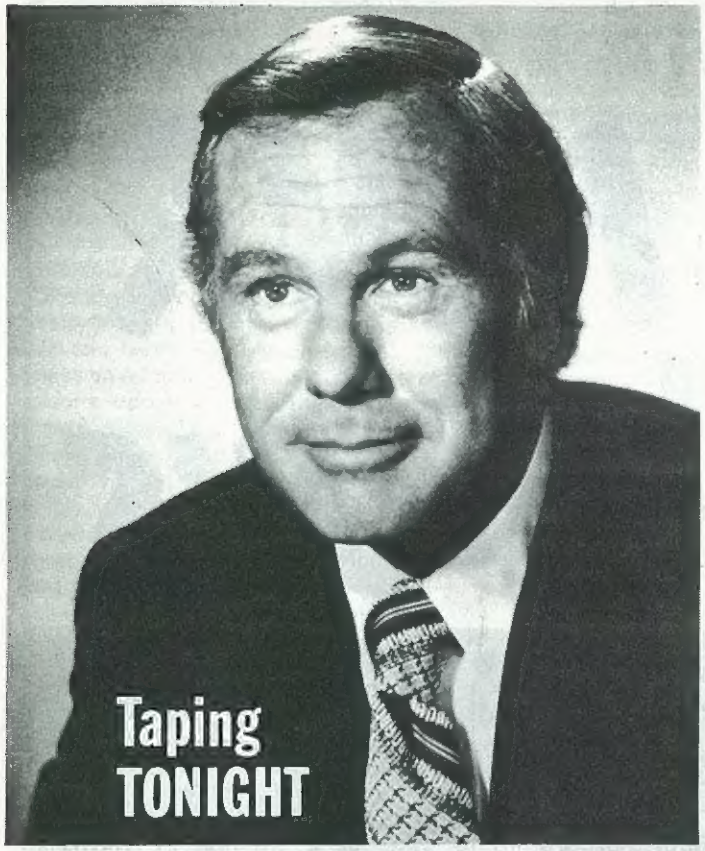

Taping TONIGHT

Vagrant thoughts about the concept of video space and how little it resembles physical, earthly space may pop into one's mind while watching the taping of a TV show, especially one at which a studio audience is present—notably, or at least conveniently for the sake of example, "The Tonight Show Starring Johnny Carson" on NBC. Three times I've sat in the unbelievably penetrating chill of Johnny's vengefully air-conditioned Burbank studio and felt that I was seeing one of the most familiar rituals in the world from the skewed perspective of a recently relocated Orkan. The "Tonight" show in person doesn't look anything like the "Tonight" show on television; if the thing opened on Broadway as a stage attraction, complete with guest stars and free admission, it wouldn't even attract village winos seeking shelter from the storm.

The "Tonight" show may have obvious origins in radio and vaudeville, particularly considering Carson's oft-stated motto that an old joke should never be thrown away if there might be one more titter left in it. But in certain senses it is pure television, and you realize this at once when you sit with the studio audience and watch it, because everything is playing not to the people in the seats but to the unseen gazillions who will watch the tape played back later that night, when it is teleported into their proverbial bedrooms.

Of course, studio audiences are mere props, cushions, adornments, to help create the illusion of an event for viewers and to give the entertainers a source of immediate sonic response. But it's eerie to watch a show performed in front of you and feel as though somehow you're eavesdropping on a private conversation between other parties. If Carson merely nods or winks to the audience during the show's innumerable commercial breaks, they glow with gratitude; mostly during these breaks, he sits in the dark (the hot lights are turned off to give him a rest), rapping his pencil on the desk in rhythm to brassy yawps from the most overpraised band in the history of music.

You couldn't in a million years get 500 people in a room to watch this show if not for the fact that 10 million people will be seeing it later, vicariously, in their homes. Except that with television, the vicarious becomes the actual and the actual the vicarious, if you get my drift.

And Johnny's studio space has nothing much in common with Johnny's screen space. Johnny's space, significantly, is one which nary a soul gets to violate, either during the monologue, when he is held in respectful mid-shot, or during the interview portions of the program, when a "slave" camera sits glued to Johnny's face so director Bobby Quinn can switch to one of his comic facial reactions at any moment.

TV cameras make studio space look larger; the first thing that strikes newcomers to Johnny's studio is that everything looks small and cramped—Johnny's desk, on the audience's left, appearing much closer to the rattlesome band, on the right, than it looks on TV. The way it looks on TV is all that counts, however; and the random, trivial, even tedious spectacle in the studio looks compact, orderly, amusing and even fitfully delightful when watched through the keyhole of the television screen.

Another impression one may get from seeing the "Tonight" show in person is that the whole apparatus has gotten a little sad and worn. Band leader Doc Severinsen and announcer Ed McMahon, dragged out to do the warm-up that presumably gets the audience in a festive mood (the folks are already salivating at the thought of seeing Johnny when they enter the chilly old meat-locker), look weak and weary. Severinsen suggests an aging urban cracker who buys embroidered jeans and should have changed to gabardine about a decade ago. Ed's jaw trembles slightly, like a grandpa's; and during interviews, he sits silent on the couch, out of camera range, like a still-life from the Hollywood Wax Museum.

On one particular night, when Carson had elected to do another of his Aunt Blabby routines, a bit borrowed from Jonathan Winters' Maudie Frickert, it was hard not to wonder how much longer Carson, 52 and gray, can continue to ridicule old folks from a distance, real or imagined. With Ed's jowls quivering beside him, the spectacle took on certain macabre aspects in person that somehow didn't quite come across on the air. Perhaps, for some, television is a magic mirror with a gauze filter in front of it. On TV, Carson is still able to suggest feckless, even impish, youthfulness.

Two years ago Carson sat in the super-duper electronics rumpus room—actually more of a rumpus house—behind his Bel-Air home and, looking considerably older with an open shirt that revealed the wrinkles in his neck (covered with a necktie on the air), declared, "I am sure I won't be doing 'The Tonight Show' in 10 years. I doubt if I'll be doing it at 55." He also said, in response to perpetual speculation about his successor to the throne of national court jester, "When I go, they can get anybody they want."

But watching Johnny on TV, confined to the video space he is so brilliant at dominating—he is the king of the frame—it seems unthinkable that the show could exist without him. Jack Paar, lovable terror that he was, obviously couldn't continue setting off fireworks forever; Johnny has more thoroughly ingratiated himself into American homelife, like pancakes or pets.

None of this is to challenge the notion that "The Tonight Show Starring Johnny Carson" still thrives as a buoyant institution after 16 years on the air, or that Carson is a world champion of justifiable longevity.

Johnny has his own space, and Walter Cronkite has his own space, and the Pillsbury Doughboy has his own space. And if you want to keep them real, and in their own respective spaces, stick to the reassuring illusions and stay away from the negligible realities. Don't go see Johnny in the flesh; he only lives in at Your House, U.S.A.

—Tom Shales

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BY CARL MACEK

A Jolting Tale of Paranoia in the Fanfare Tradition

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FEMME FATALES

AND MUCH MORE...

Back in post-World War II France, a young critic named Bruno Frank, starved for American films since the beginning of the war, sat down and watched Hollywood movies until they came out of his ears. As the films rolled by, he noticed that in quite a number of them there were similar traits that began to form a distinct pattern. In *The Maltese Falcon, This Gun For Hire, The Woman in the Window, Phantom Lady, Murder My Sweet* and *Double Indemnity* there was a particular mood that was both fatalistic and hardboiled. An overriding darkness enveloped the characters and situations occurring in a majority of the more interesting American film products of this period, 1941-45. It was their muted ambience that initially prompted Bruno Frank to term these movies "film noir" (black film), basing his categorization on "roman noir," or black literature, produced by the hardboiled school of 1930s pulp fiction writers — Raymond Chandler, Dashiell Hammett, Horace McCoy, James M. Cain, Paul Cain, Raoul Whitfield and a host of others. Bruno Frank pointed out a trend that was to last for more than a decade of American filmmaking.

The 1940s produced a distinct visual style of filmmaking that's been termed low-key. This particular imagery is heavily influenced by the German expressionist photography of the 1920s — a visual style based in part on the interplay between light and dark, or, in a word, chiaroscuro. A defining motif for film noir is this dark, black visual style. To some people any 1940s detective movie is film noir, but many such movies had that visual style without the existential bias (another noir motif) found in the hardboiled literature of the time. And a number of films, like *Scarlet Street* and *Thieves Highway,* maintained both a noir visual style and a hardboiled outlook without having anything to do with the detective genre. Film noir isn't a genre defined by predictable situations, characters or settings, but by attitude and a certain visual style. It's useful to note the differences between the gangster movies of the 1930s and the noirs of the '40s, because the pace and rhythm of both types illustrates another defining motif of film noir. In early gangster films such as *Scarface, Little Caesar* and *Public Enemy,* there was a staccato level of violence punctuated by bursts of machine gun fire, exploding bombs, and the squeal of tires racing down city streets. Participation in this spectacle of violence afforded the gangster the title of hero, occasionally canonizing him as a symbol of society and environment that forces ordinary people to assume extraordinary methods to succeed. The noir film was completely opposite. There was a ritualization of violence and torture which, although not as flamboyant as its 1930s predecessors, could produce a depressing aftereffect. Witness the drugged nightmare of Dick Powell in *Murder My Sweet,* the sadistic prison guard (Hume Cronyn) in *Brute Force,* and Richard Widmark's demented cackling as he pushes an invalid woman down a flight of stairs in *Kiss of Death.* The noir hero is weak and constantly lost in the corruption of his chaotic world. It is the introduction of an unsightly world and a paranoid hero struggling to survive in it that distinguishes the noir film from the gangster film.

Though it's difficult to find a wholly adequate definition of film noir, this should serve as a primer to the ongoing efforts to come up with a satisfactory description. Remember the key word "black," applied to both visual style and thematic mood, and the concept of noir shouldn't seem quite so obscure. This noir quality was found not only in movies of the period but also in other forms of popular entertainment, including certain comic books that appeared at the end of World War II and flourished throughout the late 1940s and early '50s.

"Louie's head bobbed to one side as he slumped to the floor. The blood that was oozing from his lips took on a bright crimson tone . . . something must have given way inside him . . . it was arterial blood. Louie was dead. I walked past the hush of the crowd to the Pontiac and got it going. I took a crumbled Chestie from the pack . . . flipped it out the window and pushed the pedal down to the floor." A few lines of voiceover dialogue extracted from a 1940s private eye film noir? Actually this sequence is quoted verbatim from a 1954 comic book called *Johnny Dynamite,* written in pulp style and drawn with noir atmospherics by Pete Morisi.

Humphrey Bogart became one of the first noir private eyes in *The Maltese Falcon*

Images of a classy femme fatale lounging seductively on the bed of a cheap hotel room; a little cheesecake leading to sexual arousal; the smoking barrels of a discharged revolver; chases through the swamps; kidnap, murder, robbery and an eventual embrace of love and death — all elements suggesting a Johnny Craig yarn for EC comics' *Crime Suspenstories.* But these images are an integral part of Joseph H. Lewis' classic 1949 film noir, *Gun Crazy.*

These examples point to a more than casual relationship that developed between films and comics during the postwar period — an era in which an overriding sense of cynicism and hopelessness became vogue, created by a unique cultural climate and aesthetic stimulation that has since been termed noir by a number of critics. In general, much of the critical assessments concerning comics and film has revolved around the similarities of form required to engage in visual storytelling — composition, lighting, sequential breakdown, camera angle and so on. But to fully understand the relationships between these two separate media in regard to noir sensibility, it's necessary to go beyond form and concentrate on the use of similar themes, motivations and basic concepts. Fortunately a number of suitable examples exist that enable one to see where noir began and where it went in comics as well as films.

One of the major antecedents of noir sensibility was the hardboiled literature found in novels (Paul Cain's *Fast One,* Benjamin Appel's *Brain Guy*) and pulp magazines (*Black Mask, Dime Detective*) in the 1930s. This writing created an environment of private eyes wandering through nightmarish shadow worlds, of punks and human slugs struggling to hold onto the shreds of life in the jungle known as the underworld, of women dedicated to luring unsuspecting men to destruction. In effect murder and other forms of crime were put back where they belonged. It was no longer a game of the bored upper crust, a ploy familiar to the readers of Arthur Conan Doyle, Agatha Christie and Dorothy L. Sayers. The output of hardboiled literature, however, didn't find its way to the movie screen until the early '40s in films like *I Wake Up Screaming* and *The Maltese Falcon.* The Second World War put a damper on the proceedings, only to have this new kind of detective explode onto the screen in the years immediately following the war. The comics also had their share of private eyes such as Ken Shannon, Rip Kirby and Robert Leslie Bellem's highly stylized Dan Turner, Hollywood Detec-

tive. Some were completely derived from literature while others were original creations unto themselves.

Probably the most recognizable and unique detective in early '40s comics was Will Eisner's The Spirit, an 8-page insert done for newspapers. Initially the strip was concerned with adventures founded in spectacular unrealities complete with bizarre, ultra-powerful villains. As Eisner and his shop progressed with their work on the Spirit, the tone became increasingly hardboiled. Visually it became claustrophobic and deeply rooted in urban environment. Eisner managed to create a sense of exotic sensuality and dreamlike perceptions that played off narrow panels and exaggerated angles which portrayed the city at its sleaziest. It was this attention to detail that differentiated his metaphysical private eye from the average shamus. True to his noir ambience the Spirit was a permanent victim, constantly the object of brutality and treachery. The Spirit offered a world in which pain, corruption and violence were a way of life for most of the people inhabiting it. Through the incorporation of these elements Eisner approached the subject of noir comics. He created in Denny Colt (the Spirit) a comic book character equivalent of the hardboiled Philip Marlowe or, more appropriately, Dashiell Hammett's Ned Beaumont. Eisner's character maintained a tough exterior that hid a soft inner core.

The Spirit was also distinguished by a refined pictorial style that borrowed from both photographic reality and German expressionism. The use of shadows, a characteristic visual tool of film noir, was a dominant factor in many of the Spirit's adventures. Denny Colt's exploits as Eisner pictured them signaled a revived interest in the use of low-key lighting and cluttered, almost baroque, compositions. This visual approach was a style that would become the major focal point in most of the noir films directed by Anthony Mann, Jules Dassin and Robert Siodmak.

Another important contributor to the noir sensibility in comics, which also harkened back to German expressionism, was publisher Lev Gleason's *Crime Does Not Pay.* As a title that changed format from the costume hero *Silver Streak Comics* in 1942, *Crime Does Not Pay* dealt with the subject of crime in a realistic manner. Borrowed from the expressionists was the use of the grotesque in standardizing the criminal. Gleason's pioneering effort, written and edited by Charles Biro, was to serve as the model for an avalanche of crime comics that followed after the war.

Biro's approach was patterned after the 1930s Warner Brothers gangster film, but he took the films one step farther. If Cagney and Robinson were likable — the magnetism of their screen personalities overcoming the antisocial behavior of the characters they portrayed — there were no such ingratiating qualities about the parade of public enemies in *Crime Does Not Pay.* While Warner Brothers suggested the adult criminal was corrupted in adolescence, Biro's characters started in the high-chair. His criminals were deranged, utterly beyond hope of reprieve, beyond rehabilitation. Biro's homicidal, pathological fiends were a conservative's worst suspicion confirmed: once a mad-dog killer, always a mad-dog killer.

Will Eisner's The Spirit

© 1979 Will Eisner

The stories in these comics were written to show that crime, make no mistake about it, did not pay. And yet the enthusiasm used to propel the reader into a world of crime seemed to dwell on the element of corruption, with the final appearance of justice included merely to support the comic's title. No matter how violent a character had been, no matter how heartlessly a victim had been manipulated, no matter to what depths of decadence criminals would sink to, the ending's cheap-shot retribution was supposed to prove that crime was no good. It didn't work that way. In *Crime Does Not Pay,* Biro's moralistic tales belied a recognition of the noir sensibility. The triumph of law and order, a killer getting his just deserts on the last page, wasn't enough to take away the bitter taste of torture, beatings and mass slaughter from the minds of readers. Although these early noir comics didn't accomplish their goal with the same visual style found in films of this period (Biro didn't like the use of solid blacks and deep shadows) they managed to make the same aesthetic statement through use of the grotesque, fatal protagonists and an overwhelming emphasis on crime rather than punishment.

It was only a matter of time before certain crime novels and stories transformed into comic books. Two of the most notable were *The Maltese Falcon* (*Feature book* No. 48) and *The Window* (*Famous Authors* No. 7). Both of these works were also destined to become noir films. As comics they were able to retain the particular noir bias of the originals.

Both comics were produced after the film adaptations. In the case of Hammett's *Maltese Falcon,* the book had been filmed three times since 1930. The last movie version, written and directed by John Huston in 1941 and starring Humphrey Bogart, is considered by many to be the first true film noir. The comic adaptation that appeared in 1946 is quite strange in comparison. The text is credited to Dashiell Hammett with a 1929 copyright. The art is by Rodlow Willard. The comic version of *The Maltese Falcon* isn't an outstanding example of the medium, but it's an interesting interpretation of Hammett's seedy environment. The structure of the comic is muddled, with a great many loose ends in the plot, and much is taken for granted in the construction of dialogue and panel breakdown. The entire package seems convoluted and lacking direction. The aimlessness of this comic is a perfect correlative to the noir attitudes beginning to surface in select private eye films of the period.

The Window, adapted from Cornell Woolrich's 1947 novelette "The Boy Who Cried Murder," is a different situation altogether. Drawn by H.C. Kiefer, one of the most recognizable artists of the *Classics Illustrated* group, the comic has a more claustrophobic sense. One reason for the difference between these two interpretations becomes apparent when seen chronologically. *The Window* was turned into a comic book in 1951. Kiefer was able to respond to the abundance of noir elements present in films and other artwork of that period. Regardless of whether Kiefer went to the movies looking for images, they found their way into his work. There isn't a great deal of slickness to Kiefer's art, yet it manages to capture in this assignment some of the film noir flavor.

An obscure comic book called *Bold Stories* shows, in a novel manner, the association between film noir and comics. Put out by Kirby Publishing in 1950, in a 25¢ digest size format with 144 full-color pages of "humor, crime and gorgeous dames," these adult-oriented comics contained some gems of noir storytelling. When the novelty of burlesque humor had worn off, the reader could turn to the uncompromising world of noir in one particular feature — a sleazy milieu of corruption,

violence and treachery inhabited by private eye Pete Webb.

The March 1950 issue has a Pete Webb story titled "Criss Cross." Aside from the title reference to Robert Siodmak's 1949 noir thriller, the plot seems to be lifted directly from two Raymond Chandler novels turned into films — *Murder My Sweet*'s stolen jewels and ritzy femme fatale, and *The Lady in the Lake*'s grisly shower slaying. Even the now-cliched "a dark pit opened up and I fell in" is used when Webb is struck unconscious. The anonymous writer apparently also managed to sneak titles of noir films in the dialog: "Well, babe, I guess it's *too late for tears*" (1949, with Lizabeth Scott and Dan Duryea) and ". . . looks like you've become a *fallen angel*" (1945, directed by Otto Preminger). The references may not have been intentional, but they suggest the degree to which noir had imbedded itself in popular culture at the time. In terms of visual style (the artist is also unsigned) "Criss Cross" isn't an outstanding noir effort, with none of the unconventional angles or baroque compositions found in the more distinct film noir style. That would come in the next Pete Webb yarn, "The Cobra Kiss," in the May 1950 issue.

This 24-page story was drawn by well known EC artist Graham Ingels, an unusually long feature for Ingels whose major output consisted of numerous 6 or 7-pagers for EC's horror comics during 1950-54. Although Ingels' reputation rightly stands on gothic horror, there's an affinity between the techniques of gothic storytelling and noir narratives that gave him an edge in interpreting noir. Something necessarily evil lurks just below the surface in both of these areas, a certain something that can be transferred into a primarily visual medium with similar effect. Ingels was a master of the horror genre, and his approach to the subject matter of "The Cobra Kiss" is reminiscent of the technique he would soon refine in those stories. The noir mood of the period is captured in his scratchy linework and shadowy contours. He handles the world of the small-time private detective with an uncanny eye for detail. The clutter of Webb's office is organized chaos. The inclusion of *objets d'art* in a dark mansion is a gesture to the noir attitude of elitism experienced by corrupt individuals who try to cover up their villainy with a veneer of culture. Much of the storytelling here, generally in the form of romantic narration, reeks of noir films like *Double Indemnity* and *Raw Deal*. Even the ultimate embrace of love and death finds its way into "The Cobra Kiss." Muted motifs, femme fatales, associations between sex and violence, corrupt environment and more are all evident in this noir entry hidden among

Evolution of the grotesque, from noir to horror. Top to bottom: Richard Widmark in *Night and the City;* Laird Cregar in *The Lodger;* Rondo Hatton in a 1940s B movie (we're stumped on which one; you tell us); cover by Don Heck, 1953.

Bold Stories' profusion of cheesecake comics and gag cartoons.

Three other comic book artists who captured a noir style in their work were Al Feldstein, Johnny Craig and Pete Morisi. Feldstein, along with Craig, was one of the original EC artists who illustrated late '40s romance, western and crime. Feldstein's technique approximated what his name seemed to suggest — gothic, Wagnerian, brooding, fraught with long shadows cast amidst graveyard tombstones or on deserted city street corners. If his work were a typeface it could be called Modern Grotesque — a curious meld of the unorthodox Basil Wolverton at his most serious and the slick shop styles of Fiction House and Fox, companies at which Feldstein freelanced before joining EC permanently. Yet the men and women populating his stories were even-featured, perciously so after the manner of Hollywood B movie leads, well-tailored and groomed. He took great care delineating hairstyles, lapels, creases in hats and baggy double-breasted suits, all conspicuous elements of 1940s noir films. Often his figures were rather stiffly constructed, but the presence of heavy black outlines and controlled shadow detail established a mood that overcame occasional anatomical deficiencies. His work was studied, even laborious, with an almost machine-like quality bordering on the bold relief of a woodcut. In scenes of physical conflict and dramatic crisis his characters would react in awkwardly exaggerated poses similar to those of 1920s German expressionist films. This technique was revived to bizarre effect in RKO's 1940 *Stranger on the Third Floor,* a noirish exercise in paranoia that featured claustrophobic atmosphere and a subjectively staged ten-minute nightmare sequence.

A good example of comics exploiting the effect of claustrophobia can be seen in Feldstein's "Escape" (*Vault of Horror* No. 16, 1950), a story that takes place entirely in a prison. The sensation of confinement is made almost palpable by the suggestion of substance with which Feldstein could draft brick and masonry. The oppressiveness of the prison structure is a key element in the story, Feldstein's style conveying the feel of a cold, gray environment. In addition to its visuals the plot of "Escape" is noirish in its fatalistic, no-way-out theme of a protagonist bringing about his own destruction. The main character, a former crime syndicate boss serving a long sentence, is ostensibly moving toward freedom by means of an escape plan involving his being carried to the outside within a wooden coffin. He makes a series of choices that lead him into an ever more confining set of circumstances. From the relative openness of

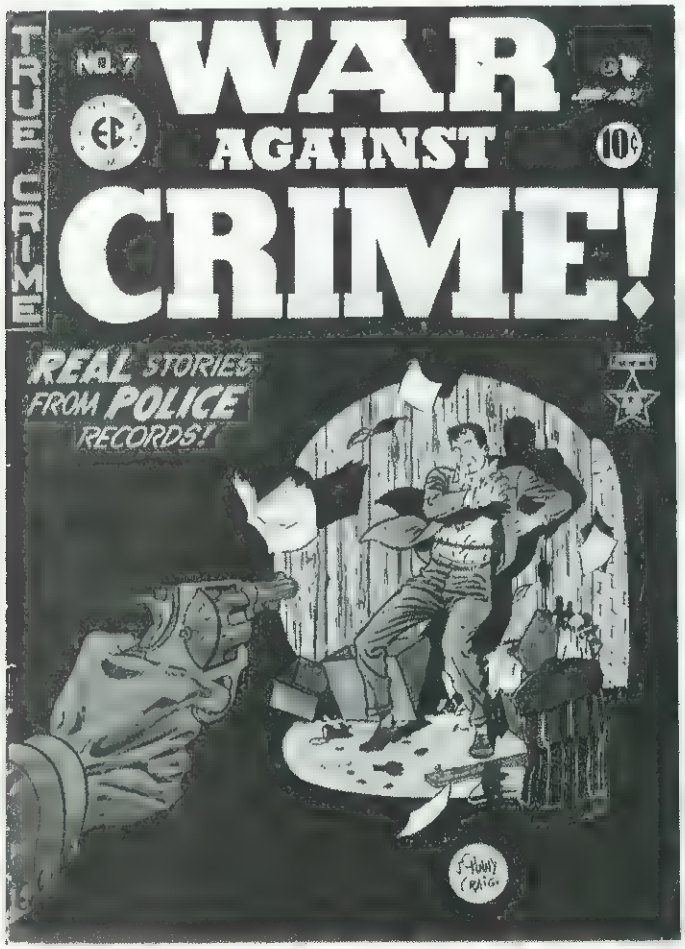
the prison yard he goes into the isolation of the prison mortuary, and soon to the restraints of a coffin — ultimately culminating in his death when the box, mistakenly assumed to contain a corpse, is fed into the consuming flames of the prison's newly-built crematorium.

Feldstein's work also conveyed the anxiety-ridden paranoiac mood of certain noir films in stories such as "Terror Train" (*Vault of Horror* No 12, 1950), probably his single finest noir among those he illustrated himself. "Terror Train" is that rare bird, an EC horror story where no one gets killed. In fact, there's no crime in it at all. The noir approach derives instead from the imagined threat of murder as seen through the eyes of a paranoid woman, revealed at the end to be telling her story from the confines of a mental institution. This Freudian characterization was deglamorizing and somewhat misogynistic (another noir motif), an addition to the ranks of femme fatales, gun molls and shrewish wives. Feldstein soon had to give up illustrating stories because of his increased writing and editorial duties, but his noir outlook was strongly felt throughout EC's remaining years.

Johnny Craig, like Feldstein, is best known as one of the original EC artists, his work going back to the gangster-oriented *Crime Patrol* and *War Against Crime* of the late '40s. Craig was not only an artist, he wrote his own scripts and eventually edited comics in which he worked. His point of view in regard to noir was more perceptive than that of perhaps anyone else's in comics at the time. In the best tradition of the darkest noirs, he was concerned with the tensions and undercurrents that lay beneath the deceptively tranquil middle class facade — the possibilities for violence and murder inherent in domestic conflicts. Just as the classic noir films had little to do with the professional criminal or the battle between organized crime and the forces of justice, the underworld, if seen at all in a Craig yarn of the early 1950s, was peripheral to the actual story. *The Postman Always Rings Twice, Double Indemnity* and *Sorry, Wrong Number* were models for the kind of domestic crime that Craig would develop in *Crime Suspenstories*. His characters in these situations reacted intensely to stress. They sweated. Beads of perspiration dotted brows furrowed with apprehension. They chain-smoked, gestured with sharply articulated hands, worried, talked to themselves in stream-of-consciousness paranoia. Craig incorporated literary devices borrowed from the hardboiled writers of the period in his use of romantic narration, convoluted time structure, terse sentences and a fatalistic outlook.

His art also reflected the noir ambience, especially during the 1950-51 period. His early efforts for *Crime Suspenstories* are good examples of the noir pictorial style, filled with dark, shadowy settings and high contrast lighting effects. There was an expressionistic feeling to his work. Many times his stories required that the visual reinforcement derive in particular from the warped mind of the criminal, thus allowing Craig to bring another noir stylistic into the comics medium. There are too many stories to mention individually, but just about every one contains elements either in plot or visual input to classify them as noir. Craig, among all EC craftsmen, was the one most consistently attuned to interpreting noir attitudes.

Pete Morisi is a more obscure contributor to noir comic books, his work usually appearing in offbeat or so-called esoteric comics of the period. His definitive effort in this area is *Johnny Dynamite*. Again, as with Craig, this is a case in which the artist not only provides the pictures but the words that go along with them. Johnny Dynamite was a one-eyed private dick who would never take nothin' from nobody, the perfect comic book equivalent of the noir detec-



Noir imagery: Rain-slicked city streets at night

Charles McGraw and William Conrad in *The Killers*, 1946

© 1979 William M. Gaines

tive hero. He was vulnerable and easily sidetracked. But once Johnny Dynamite got a good bite on something he never let go until the situation was resolved. Murder, blackmail, doublecross, vice, revenge — all elements of the Johnny Dynamite comics.

Morisi was artist concerned with the heavy use of black. The environment was treated simply and with a strong feeling for the decay that was common in the urban milieu. He was attracted to the ritualistic nature of violence. Many of his Johnny Dynamite panels would linger on violent situations. The effect was one of slow, measured, almost sexually exciting violence. It's this type of violence that differentiates noir films like *Kiss of Death* and *T-Men* from the more rapid-fire pryotechnics of gangster movies like *Scarface* and *Little Caesar.*

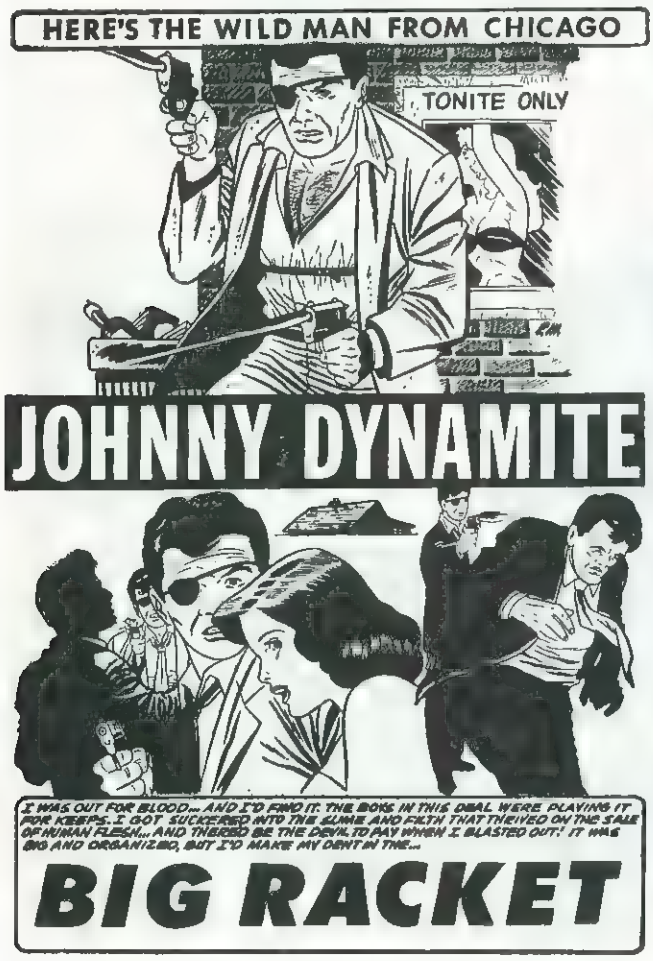
While Johnny Craig focused on the fatalistic relationships of people brought into a web of crime — a remarkably modern technique for the comics of that period — Pete Morisi concentrated on environment. He created an unmistakable locale that serves as an homage to the noir films of the late '40s and early '50s. The character of Johnny Dynamite himself was patterned after John Garfield, a key noir actor. More recently Steranko has brought another homage to the noir sensibility in a book entitled *Chandler.* Constructed as an illustrated novel, *Chandler* captures, with more style and economy of line, the same mood and tone that Morisi expressed. Steranko, unlike artists who worked during the noir period, has the ability to look back on the era and carefully select his images and points of view for maximum effect.

The problem of adapting noir subjects to the comics medium is quite apparent. Virtually all films of this nature were photographed in black and white. That type of limited visual perception is fine when dealing with film, but in comics the emphasis on black and white is self-defeating to a four-color product. Certain EC stories in the 1950-52 period tried to avoid this problem by using a mono-chrome technique when the situation warranted. Yellow suggests isolation, a common noir motif, and often an entire panel would be colored yellow to achieve that effect. Jack Davis' "Colt Single Action Army Revolver" (a western noir from *Two-Fisted Tales* No. 20, 1951) makes substantial use of this device.

Several comics adapted noir films with limited success. Avon tried twice in the early '50s with *The Underworld Story* and *The Unknown Man.* These two Eagle-Lion movies were constructed with typically dark noir stylistics. *The Underworld Story,* directed by Cy Enfield, was filled with striking contrasts between black and white images (Howard da Silva under a bright sunlamp in a warehouse, to name just one). The comic adaptations just couldn't deal with the over-use of black and maintain their accepted, four-color format. Instead the emphasis was placed on the noirish plots. This was also the case in Magazine Enterprises' *Movie Thrillers* version of Paramount's *Rope of Sand,* where the major noir content was reduced to the ritualistic torture inflicted upon the Burt Lancaster character by a sadistic security officer.

Several publishers tried to deal with plots from noir films in 5 to 7-page adaptations in horror comics of the period. *Horrific* No. 4, in a story called "Hating Corpse," gave an unmistakably similar treatment to elements found in Billy Wilder's *Double Indemnity.* Details of the plot are different, yet the device of narration coming from a dying man and the use of irony in Wilder's film create a strangely reminiscent atmosphere. There is also a trace of *D.O.A.* (Dead on Arrival) in the final pages of *Horrific's* coterie of noir derivations.

Although film noir was not a genre — existing more out of mood, tone and


HERE'S THE WILD MAN FROM CHICAGO
TONITE ONLY
JOHNNY DYNAMITE
I WAS OUT FOR BLOOD... AND I'D FIND IT. THE BOYS IN THIS DEAL WERE PLAYING IT FOR KEEPS. I GOT SUCKERED INTO THE SLIME AND FILTH THAT THRIVED ON THE SALE OF HUMAN FLESH... AND THERE'D BE THE DEVIL TO PAY WHEN I BLASTED OUT! IT WAS BIG AND ORGANIZED, BUT I'D MAKE MY DENT IN THE...
BIG RACKET

Noir imagery: Caught by unseen hostile forces

sensibility — comics managed to find usable iconography and plot situations which approximated noir films. Use of the femme fatale was one of the simplest ways a comic could attain a noir outlook. Two of the most interesting examples appear in *Underworld True Crimes Stories* No. 1 and *Lawbreakers Always Lose* No. 1, both from the early '50s. In the first comic a story entitled "The Female Menace" has Marge Morrow sentenced for an unspecified crime. Once in prison she effects a jail break and murders several people along the way. There is no explanation for her villainous deeds. She moves from one murder to another, using her ample sexuality to reach her criminal goals. In the *Lawbreakers* story called "Adam and Eve, Crime Incorporated," a husband is forced into a life of crime by his seductive and greedy wife. He engages in robbery and eventually murder to satisfy the desires of his vicious mate. When he finally asks her why she drives him into a deeper and deeper life of crime she answers "I'm just one of those 'fatal' women! C'mon, that diner won't stay open all night!"

It is interesting to follow the eventual demise of film noir and the similar end afforded the pre-code crime comics of that period. Slowly the emphasis began to change in regard to the noir outlook. Originally there was no need to moralize. People were willing to accept at face value a story of crime and corruption existing in their environment. But as crime increased in real life and the cold war escalated into an anti-communist witch hunt, several elements in the noir philosophy began to change. Initially the Senate House Committee on Un-American Activities (H.U.A.C.) investigated the reported presence of communists in the motion picture industry in 1947. This resulted in a purge of ten filmmakers who refused to answer whether or not they had ever been members of the communist party. These filmmakers, dubbed by the media as the Hollywood Ten, were relatively influential in the making of noir films,

Art by Alex Toth from "The Crushed Gardenia," *Who Is Next?* No. 5, January 1953

"JOHNNY WAS SENTENCED TO REFORM SCHOOL FOR EIGHTEEN MONTHS, AND ONE DAY, WHILE AT WORK —
OWWW! M-MY HAND!
GEE, I'M SORRY, JOHNNY! DIDN'T SEE YOUR HAND!
"SUDDENLY, THE LATENT FURY OF JOHNNY'S FIERY TEMPER BURST LOOSE — A WILD CRY OF RAGE, AND THEN —
YOU DID IT ON PURPOSE! I'LL KILL YOU! YOU'RE ALWAYS PICKIN' ON ME! THINK I AIN'T GOOD ENOUGH! I'LL FIX YA!
HE'S CHOKIN' CHRIS!
I'LL GET 'IM, AN' GET 'IM RIGHT!
WE BETTER BRING THIS GUY DOWN TO SEE DOC CRANE —
YEAH! HE'S PSYCHO, PETE!
"I EXAMINED JOHNNY THOROUGHLY, THROUGH MANY PSYCHIATRIC TESTS, AND MADE AN ALARMING DISCOVERY! —
I WON'T FIGHT ANYMORE, DOC! I-I PROMISE! I DON'T KNOW WHAT COMES OVER ME — I-I CHOKE UP — AN' WANNA KILL. SEE, DOC?
WE'LL SEE, BOY, WE'LL SEE! — BETTER GET BACK TO YOUR GROUP..
THANKS, DOC —
"THE WARDEN AND I DISCUSSED JOHNNY AT LENGTH —
MY TESTS PROVE THAT JOHNNY'S A PARANOID — A POTENTIAL MURDERER, AND SHOULD RECEIVE PSYCHIATRIC TREATMENT!
NOW, DOC — THE BOY'S A HOTHEAD, I KNOW! WE'VE HAD HIS KIND BEFORE! WE'LL CALM DOWN — LOTS OF HARD WORK SHOULD FIX 'IM!
ALL RIGHT, WARDEN — I CAN'T FORCE TREATMENT ON FABER, NOR CAN I GUARANTEE THAT WE BOTH WON'T REGRET THIS, WHEN HE'S SPILLED INNOCENT BLOOD! THAT BOY'S A KILLER — FOR SURE
DON'T LET IT WORRY YOU, DOC!

Femme fatale Gloria Grahame in *The Big Heat*, 1953

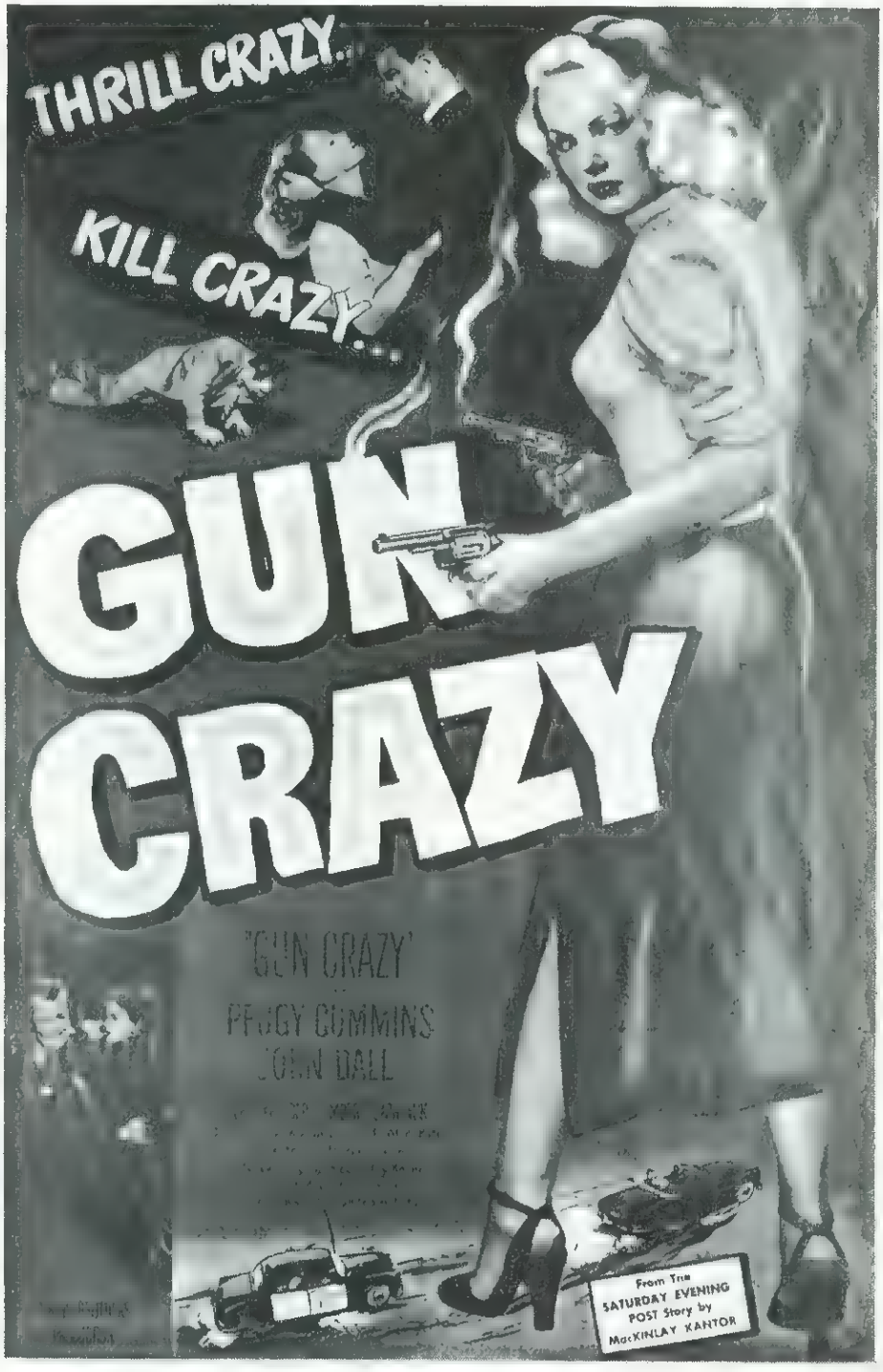
Try and Get Me, 1951

notably producer Adrian Scott and director Edward Dmytryk (the team responsible for *Murder My Sweet, Cornered* and *Crossfire*) and writer Albert Maltz (*This Gun For Hire* and *Naked City*). Not to associate film noir with a communist movement, but a number of liberal filmmakers were responsive to the sensibility brought out in the noir period. The Senate investigation soon resulted in a blacklist that discriminated against people thought to be party members or sympathizers. Dmytryk was jailed for a short time on charges of contempt and then faced the Hollywood blacklist that forced him to find work in Europe. During the years 1947-52 he made several films in England and France until producer Stanley Kramer, himself a liberal, challenged the blacklist in 1952 by hiring Dmytryk to direct *The Sniper.* This film is an example of how the previously uncompromising noir approach could be acceptably watered down to meet prevailing social attitudes. The movie's subject centered on the psychological problems of disturbed mental health as the root of crime in America. This was also a theme presented in blacklisted director Cy Enfield's bizarre indictment against lynching entitled *Try and Get Me.* These films softened the fatalistic noir outlook by suggesting that if you cured the mind then the disease of crime would vanish. The same philosophy surfaced in comic books of the period such as Standard's *Who is Next?.* Alex Toth best expressed the point of view in his lead story, "The Crushed Gardenia."

For this and a number of other reasons, true film noir faded from the scene. Eventually the 1950s and their wide-screen technicolor extravaganzas, combined with the rise of television, caused the aesthetic period of film noir to evaporate. By the late '50s it was gone.

In the comics medium a code was adopted in 1954 that basically accomplished the same thing. The guts were removed both literally and figuratively from EC and the other independent companies which thrived on the dark side of human nature. The investigation resulting in the self-administered Comics Code was a product of the same paranoia that also affected films and even paperback books. There was a movement to feed the public pablum. Johnny Craig and many other artists moved away from comic books totally. The artists and writers responsive to the noir climate of the '40s were replaced by a group that produced more easily acceptable examples of visual storytelling. There have been glimpses of this noir sensibility in more contemporary comics, Gil Kane's 1968 *His Name is Savage* serving as a good example. And Alex Toth, always a partisan of black and white over color, continues to work in a style that has a strong sense of noir-influenced chiaroscuro.

A case can be made for the association of film noir and comic books merely by the vast number of comics which picked up elements found in the most common noir films. A classic example of the comic industry's exploitation of the noir philosophy can be seen in *Hollywood Film Stories* No. 1's photo-style treatment of no less than three noir films out of five adaptations. One was Joseph H. Lewis' *Gun Crazy,* entitled at this time *Deadly is the Female.* If ever there was a film equivalent of comic book imagery, *Gun Crazy* can surely qualify. The movie is as close as it could get to Johnny Craig in style, tone and pacing without Craig himself having a hand in its production — a nearly ideal film translation of the dynamics found in his early EC stories. From location sequences in a meat packing plant to cheap circus sideshow tents to death in the swamps, *Gun Crazy* stands as a brilliant testimony that an interaction took place between film noir and comic books.□



Whatever Happened To The Golddiggers?

By William Munger

Word around the Houston Music Theatre was that it was going to be their best play yet. The production was *Illya Darling* and just getting the rights to do it in Houston was something of an achievement. Another was securing Jonathan Lucas from Hollywood to direct and stage the production. Lucas' reputation was such that every actor, semi-pro and hopeful in the Lone Star state wanted in on this one. The only one who wasn't worried at the auditions was Susan McIver Lund. Every year, Susan showed up at the theatre's auditions and, every year, she came away with a meaty role. In this particular year, 1968, she was especially looking forward to the show and not just because it would be her annual working-vacation from teaching dance in the studio she co-owned. She was looking forward to it because, while she had no ambitions of ever going to Hollywood, she thought it would be interesting to work with a Hollywood-type director. About getting a part, Susan wasn't worried. She could sing and her dancing was terrific and, all in all, she was furlongs ahead of her semi-pro competition. Everything was going for her.

Only she didn't get a part.

Dismissed by Lucas from the auditions with a polite "thank you," Susan headed home, half in shock and half in rage. And for four weeks, she would intermittently remember and curse the name of Jonathan Lucas. And just when the insult—the indignity of it all—was cleansed from her pretty red head, did she get a phone call from the man himself: "Suzy, have you ever heard of the Golddiggers?" Susan said she had—they were that chorus line of gorgeous gals who had just begun appearing on the Dean Martin TV show—so what? "So," Jonathan said, "I work for that company, the one that does the Martin show, and they're looking for a replacement Golddigger. How would you like to go to Hollywood?"

Actors and actresses always talk about that moment when stardom rears its capricious head; when you know you've made it. But it usually comes after years and years and years and years of hoping. Suddenly, Susan was having it handed to her. Just like that.

The Golddiggers were the creation of TV producer/director Greg Garrison as a back-up and summer replacement for Dean Martin. After an awkward first season on Martin's NBC variety show—made awkward because Dino wouldn't rehearse and was therefore barely in his own show—Garrison took over the reins of command. He restructured the show and its rehearsal pattern so that Martin could come in only one day a week and still appear throughout the program. Rehearsals were done with a stand-in for Martin and then the singer would show up, watch a camera run-through, then go out and do it, reading jokes and song lyrics off cue cards. Guest song spots were taped other days and some performers on the show came and went, having never met Dean Martin. Pieces from different shows were taped at different times with Martin always clad in a tuxedo, thereby ensuring continuity of clothing if not humor. The method didn't always work to perfection. Editing was sometimes rough and some guests refused to return, claiming that Dean's non-rehearsals crippled their performances. But the show got on every week, and it got a respectable rating, so Greg Garrison was a hero. And to keep the time slot warm while Dino took the summer off, Garrison came up with the Golddiggers.

He claimed their success was due to a magical look he had envisioned. He wanted sunny, cheerleader types. He did not want movie star looks. Fancy hair-dos were frowned upon; so was excessive make-up. He didn't necessarily want seasoned professionals, either, and so open auditions were held. In Fall of 1967, exactly 400 girls showed up at NBC Rehearsal Hall 1. Some of them had no music, no photo, no resume, no leotards—nothing but a desire to get on TV. Of the 400, some 300 could be easily dismissed as too fat, too homely, too old or too weird. "It was very sad," Lucas recalls, "seeing some of the girls who thought they were pretty enough to make it." Lucas was one of three who handled the auditions; the others were Garrison's assistant, Janet Tighe, and the musical director, Lee Hale. In the years to come, many such auditions would be held to find prospective Golddiggers in Hollywood, Chicago, San Francisco and Texas. Texas, for some reason, yielded the best results. That's where Lucas found Susan Lund. She was the only Golddigger ever hired without first being okayed by Greg Garrison.

It was like something out of a dream, the way she was whisked off to Hollywood. Susan claims she was picked up at the airport by a limousine that took her straight to the Coconut Grove. There, she was suited up and shoved out on stage to do a thirty minute act with girls she'd never met or rehearsed with. What's good enough for Dean Martin . . .

Then they put her up at the Starlite Motel near NBC Burbank where she rested between rehearsals. She learned the rules of being a Golddigger and received what came to be known as the official, every-six-month Greg Garrison Sex Lecture which could pretty well be summed up as "Don't." It applied particularly to the show's staff and crew and to customers in the clubs and theatres she'd be playing. Most of the girls were also asked, before signing, if they'd ever posed for nude photos or done anything else that might bring shame unto the uniform. Only one Golddigger was ever dismissed for Conduct Unbecoming.

The Golddiggers first substituted for Dean Martin on a summer show in 1968 and their roster was: Pamela Beth, Nancy Bonetti, Kathi Brimer, Lezlie Dalton, Diana Gaye Liekhaus, Deborah McFarlan, Lynn Cheryl Steiner, Debbie Thomason, Mary Kathleen Wright, Peggy Hansen and Brenda Lynne Powell. Brenda Lynne quit the group soon after to be married and have a son whom they named Jonathan as in Lucas. The 1968 show featured, as hosts, Joey Heatherton and Frank Sinatra, Jr. Later that year, Greg Garrison cornered Bob Hope in an NBC corridor and (the way Hope tells it) smooth-talked him into finding room on the plane to take the Golddiggers to Vietnam. And so Susan Lund found herself on the first of three trips at Christmas, heading for the combat zone to entertain troops.

A shot from the main title of the 1971 Golddiggers syndicated show

The ladies cluster about guest Buddy Hackett on a Dean Martin Show spot

All of the Golddiggers survived the trip but the attrition rate back home was something else. Half of the group quit and was refueled by the auditions. Of those who quit, some did so because the pace of touring had proven too grueling, while others left to get married. Being a married Golddigger was verboten, though Susan Lund's wedlock was kept secret until there was no further need to. That is to say, her career as a Golddigger outlived her marriage. But then, her career as a Golddigger also outlived everyone else's career as a Golddigger. The following year's summer show, hosted by Paul Lynde and Lou Rawls, found this line-up: Barbara Sanders, Sheryl Ullman, Deborah McFarland, Rosetta Cox, Sheila Mann, Jackie Chidsey, Peggy Hansen, Michelle Della Fave, Susie Cadham, Nancy Bonetti, Paula Cinko, Patricia Mickey and Susan Lund.

The frequent turn-over in their ranks posed problems since newcomers were continually having to be indoctrinated. Worse, a newly refurbished Golddigger troupe was often unwelcome by out-of-town bookers who demanded the same line-up they saw on TV. Once, upon arriving for an Auto Show in Detroit, the girls were inspected by the boss who didn't recognize some of them and decided Garrison had slipped some ringers in on him. It took several hours of long-distance phone calls before the ladies were allowed to perform.

The Golddiggers toured with Bob Hope again for Christmas, 1969, then were shipped off to England to do a summer show over there, this time with Charles Nelson Reilly and a British comic getting his first American exposure, Marty Feldman. The show, which made good use of Feldman's film repertoire, was so good that ABC bought a series called "The Marty Feldman Comedy Machine." To this day, Feldman's opulent eyes still flash with anger over that series—filmed as an hour originally, then hacked down to a half-hour by Garrison before it died an unseen death on ABC's mid-season schedule.

But the show Feldman did with the Golddiggers was excellent, their ranks then including Jackie Chidsey, Michelle Della Fave, Paula Cinko, Pauline Anthony, Tara Leigh, Wanda Bailey, Rosetta Cox, Patricia Mickey, Micki McGlone and Susan Lund. Micki McGlone left and was replaced by Liz Kelley before the 1970 christmas tour with Hope, the last for the Golddiggers.

It is the Christmas tours that most of the ladies recall best. For two weeks each year, they did two or more shows a day, trucked about in buses and jeeps amidst the echoes of artillery fire. At most stops, they did two numbers, plus a number with Hope, and joined in on the obligatory closing rendition of "Silent Night," which never failed to reduce a number of the Golddiggers to tears, as it conjured up for everyone the pains of being thousands of miles away from loved ones at Christmas time.

They would never play for a more receptive audience. Upon arrival at a new base, they would invariably hear the same thing—sighs of "How beautiful. Beautiful round-eyes." The girls would be escorted to dressing quarters that were probably built just for them, blankets tacked down to serve as carpeting. Most bases would also have to build a special latrine for the female entertainers. (At one stop, Ann-Margret claimed as a souvenir the toilet seat which was engraved, "This toilet seat was built especially for Ann-Margret's beautiful ass.")

Susan Lund, front row, second from right

In their dressing room, steadfastly guarded by the most polite M.P.s, they would change into their costumes, selected not for warmth or even for sexiness but for their packability and easy handling. Then it would be out onto the stage to perform to wild cheering.

The saddest part would come after when scheduling permitted, and that was the visits to the hospital wards. All of the girls learned to steel themselves for what they might see. Some of the injuries could be pretty gruesome, but the important thing was to let the soldiers know that someone back home cared. Susan recalls one incident above all others:

"I had to go in with a cheerful smile which, believe me, wasn't easy. In one ward, I saw this guy and he was missing his right leg and left arm. He was a young, good-looking guy, too. I went up to him as we always did and said, 'Hey, what's your name? My name is Suzy.' He didn't even look at me. He just said, 'What do you care?'" From there on, the dialogue went like this . . .

"Well, I came to visit you."

"No, you didn't. You're getting paid for this."

"I had to leave my boyfriend at Christmas to come over and see all you fellows."

"Nobody knows there's a war on. Nobody cares."

She could see she wasn't getting through and she scanned the rest of the ward where other injured men were happily getting the other Golddiggers to sign casts and address books. She was just about to give up when the soldier by her side said, "You ought to have my autograph."

She asked why. He said, "I was with the Green Berets."

Ms. Lund was quite impressed; she dug up a piece of paper and got the soldier to sign. As he wrote, she added, "If you put her number down, I'll call your wife or girl when we get back."

The soldier looked up at her. "You'd really do that?" She nodded yes. "Well then, I guess I ought to have your autograph, too." Before they left, the soldier also got a Polaroid photo of a half-dozen Golddiggers climbing into bed with him.

Back in the states, the Golddiggers plunged into two seasons of a syndicated/barter show for Chevrolet. By this time, (1971) the roster was: Nancy Reichert, Lee Crawford, Jackie Chidsey, Francie Mendenhall, Liz Kelley, Janice Whitby, Susan Lund, Jimmi Cannon and Tanya Della Fave. Tanya was the younger sister of Michelle Della Fave who, along with Tara Leigh, Wanda Bailey and Susan, had been moved off the previous year to form a quartet called the Ding-a-Ling Sisters. Wanda left to be married and

Susan Mc Iver

The first Ding-a-ling roster, clockwise from top: Michelle Della Fave, Wanda Bailey, Tara Leigh and Susan Lund.

Susan in the main title for the '71 show

Susan left the Garrison combine briefly and rejoined the Golddiggers on her return. Their spots as Ding-a-Lings on the Dean Martin Show were taken by Lynne Latham and Lindsay Bloom who, in turn, were replaced by Jayne Kennedy and Helen Funai. If all the switching around baffled Garrison's staff, it didn't faze the many Golddigger fans who kept a steady stream of fan mail, photo requests, marriage proposals and "other" coming in, plus indignant letters when their favorite was suddenly in absentia.

The syndicated shows featured Charles Nelson Reilly and Larry Storch the first year and Jackie Vernon and Lonnie Shorr, the second. Two sets of thirteen shows each were taped in what must be a record, even for Speed Demon Garrison. Jonathan Lucas, by now promoted to Assistant Director, remembers it as a time of great weight loss. After putting the girls through thirteen production numbers in one day, Garrison was dubbed with the affectionate nickname of Flo Hitler (as in "Flo Ziegfeld"). In three weeks each time, the shows were wrapped up and that included one freezing day spent at the beach where the girls put on bikinis and pranced about for the opening titles. Susan, because of her seniority, was given the task of riding a horse up and down the surf for the cameras.

The second season for Chevrolet, the line-up was Jackie Chidsey, Francie Mendenhall, Liz Kelley, Susan Lund, Jimmi Cannon, Karen Cavanaugh, Rebecca Olivia Jones and Loyita Chapel. It was probably the best team Garrison had ever had. It was also the most trouble. Labor/management problems cropped up with Susan cast in the role of the Golddigger Jimmy Hoffa.

Back on the road after finishing the series, the girls began to become unhappy with their old costumes and old arrangements. They were each receiving around $250 per week for their part in an act that was earning much more. Susan says, "We asked for no more money at the time but we wanted new costumes and new arrangements, plus a road manager." She presented their demands to Garrison who came through with the new costumes but no arrangements and no road manager. Then came the Mexico booking.

In November of '72, the Golddiggers were booked into a hotel in Mexico for what they thought would be a pleasant stay. It turned out to be a nightmare. The altitude made several girls ill, and the hotel manager insisted they go on anyway. What was supposed to be two shows a night was turned into three. When the hotel announced they were to spend their afternoons filming some specials for Mexican TV, at no pay, they rebelled. They said no in no uncertain terms and, this time, all the manager's threats couldn't sway them.

Then one night they went out to perform and discovered the house studded with TV cameras and glaring lights. The TV company had brought the show to them. At the close of their show, after taking their bows, Susan stepped forward and said, "Ladies and gentlemen, you have been cheated. There's a TV camera shooting all this to show on free television and they've changed our act's lighting around. I suggest you ask for your money back."

But that wasn't the worst. When their scheduled two weeks were up, they went to get their visas back from the hotel safe and were told they were staying an extra week and that their visas would not be returned until they completed that week. They went to the American Embassy and found only red tape. Finally, in desperation, they sent an ultimatum to the hotel manager: They would go on but they wouldn't sing and they wouldn't dance. They would just stand there. Threats and counter-threats were hurled about and, finally, the visas were returned and they fled for home.

Back in the U.S.A., meetings were held in Susan's apartment and a new list of demands was drafted for Garrison. It was basically the old list but with a pay increase to $500 a week. Susan says the demands were ignored and, instead, they received a lawyer's letter telling them they were expected to show up for dates in San Juan and at the Copacabana in New York. The girls' bravado faded and they complied.

It was while they were at the Copa that they realized their salaries were in arrears and they delivered another ultimatum: If they weren't paid soon, they wouldn't do the Saturday night show. Jules Podell, the Copa owner, would have none of that. He called for his checkbook and wrote a check for $20,000—which is what the act was getting—payable to Greg Garrison. But he handed the check to Susan Lund and said, "Do whatever you want with it—just don't stick me for a show tonight." The girls did the show and, upon their return to L.A., handed the check over to Garrison. Says Susan, "That was the end of the line for us. We had a little party. We put all of our false eyelashes in a pile and burned them.

Then we put all our falsies in a pile and burned them. Then we all hugged each other and talked about how wonderful it had all been." At the farewell performance of this Golddigger troupe they cried and the audience cried. Then they all went their separate ways. An all-new squad was assembled some time later.

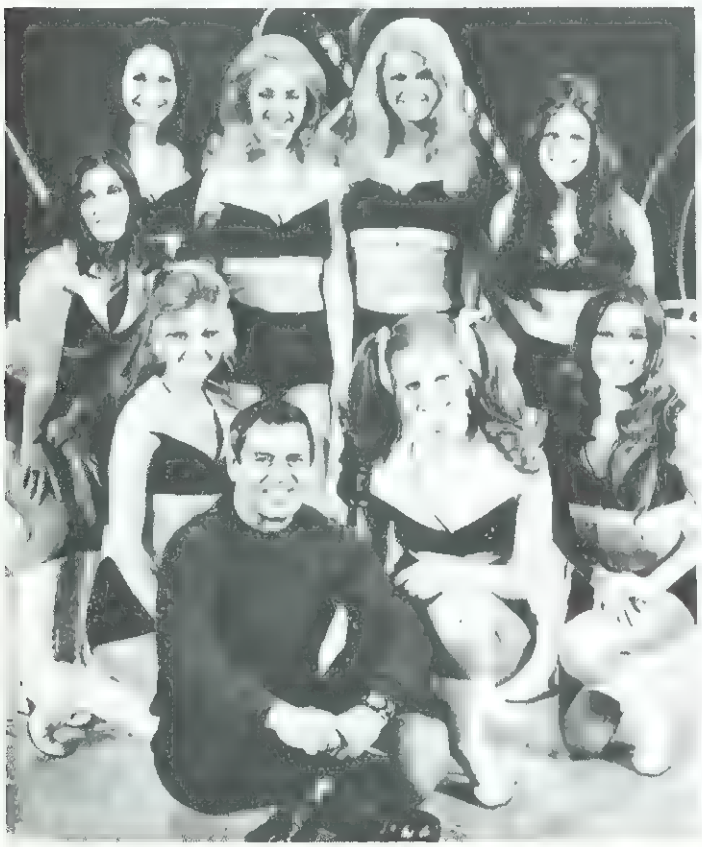
The post-Golddigger careers of most of the ladies have not been successful. Though Greg Garrison had at one time claimed that four or five of the girls had "star potential," that hasn't happened. Of the forty or so girls who were Golddiggers at one time or another, none have gone on to stardom and most have gotten out of show business altogether. One of the most talented is now a checker at Safeway. Most are housewives. A few who have technically remained in the entertainment field have done so in towns other than Hollywood. One is a background singer in Alabama. One owns a nightclub in the East. Of those whose whereabouts are known, only Michelle Della Fave, Francie Mendenhall, Loyita Chapel and Susan Lund—four of the most popular Golddiggers—are still pursuing active careers in Hollywood. Susan had a small but noticeable part in *Smokey and the Bandit* and has done other films and commercials, now back under her maiden name of Susan McIver. Though she received great TV exposure as a Golddigger and had the opportunity to work in sketches with many top guest stars, she still doesn't go out of her way to mention her days as a Golddigger. Eyeing her resume, she says, "As soon as I get a few more credits, the Golddiggers come off the resume." Michelle Della Fave is visible in several TV commercials, as is Loyita Chapel who was also seen as one of the two strippers in *The Goodbye Girl.*

All of these girls are beautiful and their talent, undeniable. But the four Golddiggers who are still pursuing Hollywood careers are only four of countless who make the rounds, and there are only so many jobs. As her Golddigger days grow dimmer, Susan McIver finds herself more and more confident—but she laughs at the notion that her Golddigger status was a stepping stone to anything. Whatever she's gotten since, she got because of her considerable talents. That many of the other ex-Golddiggers couldn't measure up is most likely the reason that so many of them are now housewives with nothing more to show for their Golddigger pasts than some scrapbook photos and the memories. And few would probably disagree that the memories of stardom, howsoever brief, made it all worth it. □

Jonathan Lucas

He's had an amazing career, this Jonathan Lucas; in fact, he's had *several* and continues to do so. And we couldn't let this Golddiggers feature go without a little addendum on the man who was so much involved.

Jonathan Lucas got out of the service in 1947 on a Monday. On Wednesday, he got a job as a replacement dancer in the Broadway production of *Bloomer Girl.* For nine consecutive Broadway shows—as a dancer, then as an actor—Lucas was constantly employed. From *Bloomer Girl* it was into *Billion Dollar Baby,* directed by Jerome Robbins. Then, in the Orson Welles production of *Around the World in Eighty Days,* he got his first on-stage lines. Next came *Finian's Rainbow* and the George Axelrod review *Small Wonder,* followed by the first play by Jean and Walter Kerr, *Touch and Go,* also starring Louis Nye, Ray Walston and Peggy Cass, among others. Then came a biggie: The revival of *Of Thee I Sing,* directed by the legendary George S. Kaufman, in which Lucas was entrusted with the romantic male lead and the hit song, "Love is Sweeping the Country." His last two Broadway jobs were *Golden Apple* (for which he was awarded the coveted Theatre World award, along with another newcomer that year named James Dean) and *Carnival.* In between the last two, though, Jonathan became a director.



Jonathan Lucas and his charges

He'd directed some commercials in New York while moonlighting (or, rather, daylighting) from shows. But when a friend, Bill Fix, who managed the Ames Brothers, called with an emergency, Lucas found himself flying to California. The gent who'd been directing the Ames Brothers in a TV show for Royal Crown Cola had to be replaced and Jonathan took over. Folks from Disney saw Lucas' work and he soon found himself as one of the two original directors of the Mickey Mouse Club show. Ed Ames (of the Brothers) lent Lucas money to buy a car and the Directors Guild worked out a plan to take instaliments from the Disney checks as payment for Guild initiation. Just as soon as that was paid off and Ames paid back, and Jonathan could finally begin drawing a full paycheck, there was an actor strike. Jonathan went back to New York and into the Copacabana as a dancer. He worked on staging the Hollywood pavillion for the New York Worlds Fair, then became choreographer and then director of the Bell Telephone Hour.

In 1962, after finishing his stint for Bell, Lucas was summoned to Detroit to stage the first acts for the Supremes, Martha and the Vandellas, the Temptations and other Motown acts. It was while they were breaking in the Supremes act at the Fairmont in San Francisco that Gower Champion called to get Jonathan to step into a part in *Carnival.*

In the years to come, Jonathan Lucas became one of the most in-demand stagers of acts. Shirley Jones, Julie London, Jane Powell, Eleanor Powell, Eddie Albert, George Chakiris, Gretchen Wyler and the Fifth Dimension were just some who wouldn't step on stage without Lucas guiding the show along. He staged the first reviews at the New York club, Upstairs at the Downstairs; and helped stage *The Beauty Part* with Bert Lahr. Finally, Greg Garrison called upon Jonathan (whom he knew from New York) to help with the Golddiggers and the rest is, as they say, history. □

THE MAGIC OF Middle-earth from J.R.R. Tolkien to Ralph Bakshi

By Bernie Zuber

"In a hole in the ground there lived a hobbit." The late Oxford professor J.R.R. Tolkien scribbled this sentence during a routine grading of examination papers. These words, from deep within his imagination, aroused his curiosity. He had to find out all about hobbits. He opened the round door of a hobbit-hole and, eventually, millions of readers followed after him. That door opened onto Middle-earth.

The name "Middle-earth" was not invented by Tolkien. Its origin goes back to the Old Norse "Midgard" and the Middle English "meddelearth," describing the place where mankind dwelt between Heaven and Hell. But regardless of this origin, and regardless of the fact that Tolkien also used dwarves, elves, wizards and dragons common to many myths, Middle-earth became his special creation. Tolkien preferred the word "sub-creation," which he believed to be a God-given gift.

Tolkien was very thorough in his creation of Middle-earth. Its geography, its ecology, the history of its various inhabitants, with their civilizations, cultures and languages, were all described in great detail. Tolkien was a professor of Anglo-Saxon and, as a philologist, he had access to several ancient languages which inspired him to create his own imaginary languages. Most of the history and culture of Middle-earth was based on these languages. Tolkien's early notes about Middle-earth date from 1917, when he was convalescing from trench fever caught in France during World War I. These notes grew into the history of the First and Second Ages of Middle-earth, published sixty years later as *The Silmarillion*. But none of it would have been successfully published if it hadn't been for that hobbit.

Hobbits, Tolkien discovered, were little people, two to four feet in height, rather plump because of their fondness for good meals, and with thick curly hair not only on their heads but on their feet. They were very sociable and liked to drink beer and smoke pipe-weed. Admittedly they bore a resemblance to English country squires. The hobbit who lived in that hole in the ground was Bilbo Baggins, who went on a journey with some dwarves to recapture their treasure from a dragon. His adventure was written by Tolkien in the early 1930s simply for the amusement of his children. But someone who worked for the London publishers Allen and Unwin read the story, and soon Tolkien was asked to write it for publication. *The Hobbit* was first published in 1937 and Tolkien was launched on a second career as a fantasy writer.

When *The Hobbit* sold successfully, Allen and Unwin expected another children's fantasy adventure about hobbits. But, by then, Tolkien had realized that the hobbits fitted into the greater scheme of Middle-earth. For years he labored on a story in which the hobbits played an important part in the history of the Third Age of Middle-earth. During his adventure in *The Hobbit*, Bilbo Baggins had accidentally discovered a magic ring. The new adventure involved Frodo, Bilbo's younger cousin, in a journey to destroy that ring before it was captured by the evil Sauron, who sought it to rule all of Middle-earth. In this epic tale hobbits, elves, men, dwarves, and all the good creatures of Middle-earth waged war against Sauron and his armies of orcs, trolls, ringwraiths, and other monsters. Publication was delayed because Allen and Unwin weren't sure how to handle this unexpectedly large work, and Tolkien's desire to also publish his other stories of the earlier ages of Middle-earth further confused matters.

Finally, in 1954, Allen and Unwin published the first volume, *The Fellowship of the Ring*, followed by *The Two Towers*, and, in 1955, *The Return of the King*. The three volumes together, complete with extensive appendices, were entitled *The Lord of the Rings*. Tolkien's original title had been *The Downfall of the Lord of the Rings and the Return of the King*, and he would have preferred to have had the book published in one large volume, but the publishers prevailed. *The Lord of the Rings*, however, is one continuous story and not a trilogy, as many critics and scholars have called it because of the three volumes.

The Lord of the Rings sold surprisingly well in hardcover and achieved even greater success in paperback. Tolkien, who had never set out to write a best-seller, and whose early writings had been published only in scholarly journals, found himself the focus of what became known as "The Tolkien Phenomenon."

The history of the Tolkien Phenomenon can be divided into four ages, just as Tolkien divided his history of Middle-earth. The First Age (1937-1964), when the hardcover editions were cherished by discriminating readers but unknown to a larger audience; the Second Age (1965-1970), when the paperback editions spread Tolkien's name from college campuses to Hippie Love-ins; the Third Age (1970-1976), when Tolkien fled the spotlight of his success and scholars quietly analyzed his work; and the Fourth Age (1977-?), when, after Tolkien's death in 1973, the full potential of his creation is being realized in products other than his books.

But before describing the history of the Tolkien Phenomenon it is necessary to briefly analyze what caused it. Why have millions of readers, of all ages and backgrounds, fallen under the spell of Middle-earth? Apparently, Tolkien struck a subconscious chord whose echoes carried back through racial memories of Myth. Regardless of twentieth century materialsim, the ancient myths are still with us, and the Tolkien Phenomenon is part of a revival of mythic themes in the arts and in our life style.

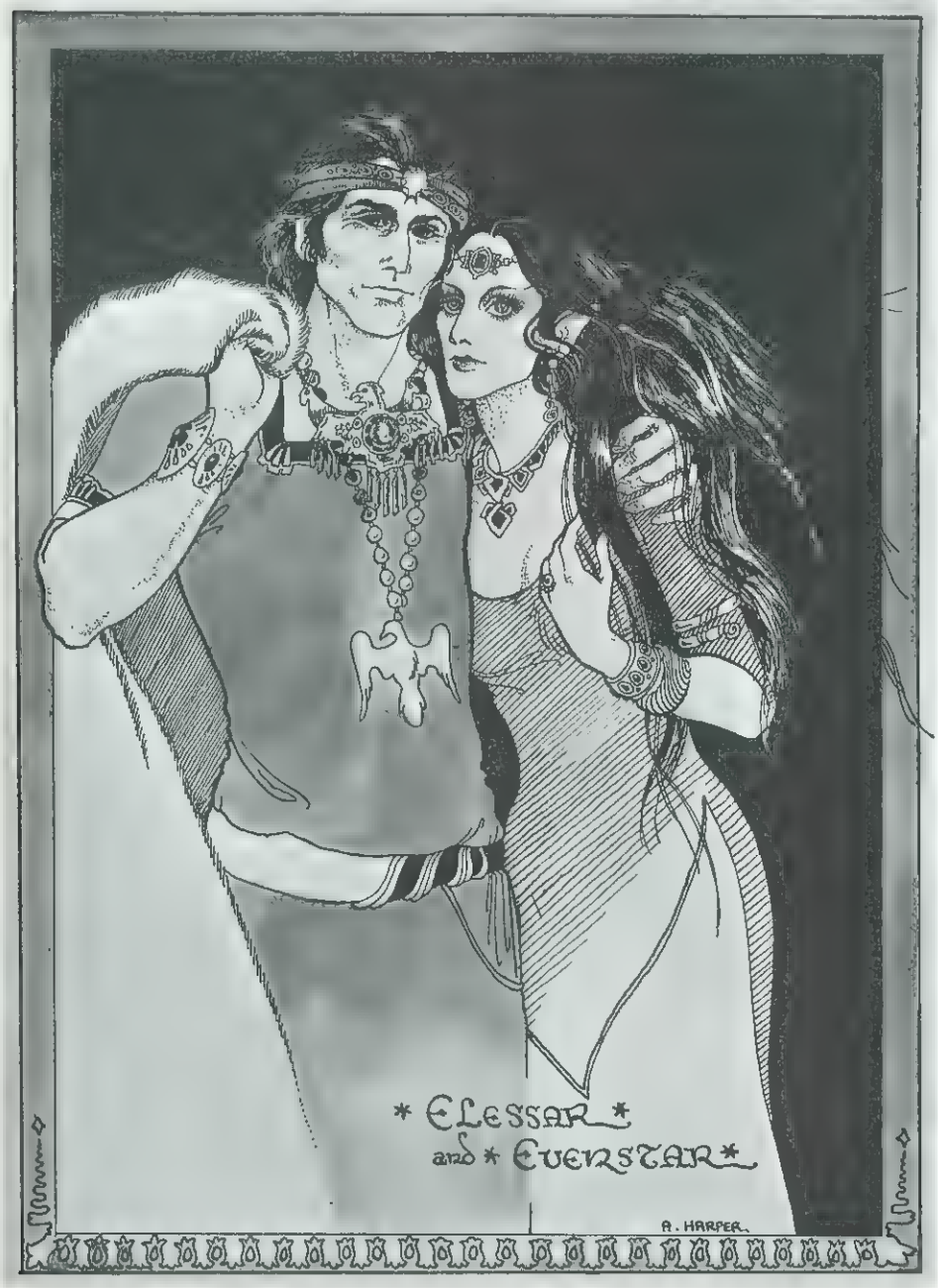
Hobbits and other characters of Middle-earth are faced with decisions about quests and heroic sacrifices. This is far from the grey world of other modern writers and philosophers in which "doing your own thing" has little consequence, there are no real villains, and heroes have become anti-heroes. Tolkien appealed to readers tired of that wishy-washy approach. He gave them a world of epic proportions comparable to those found in Classic Literature, long neglected in favor of Modern Literature. As a matter of fact, Tolkien can be credited with reviving interest in fantasy authors whose books had long been out of print.

Tolkien's contribution to contemporary literature and his basically Christian philosophy have been analyzed in several excellent books, so I don't propose to go on at length about that. My concern is with the history of the Tolkien Phenomenon, primarily in the United States, where his books have had even more of an effect on readers than in his own country.

The First Age of the Tolkien Phenomenon, between the first publication of *The Hobbit* in 1937 and the success of the paperback editions in the 1960s, now seems to us ancient history, hard to describe in detail. Those who recognized *The Hobbit* as

an exceptional children's book cherished it and passed it on from one generation to the other. But children's literature is not taken seriously by many critics. So, after initially good reviews, *The Hobbit* was relegated to the children's book shelf, though it continued selling well over the years. *The Lord of the Rings*, however, came to the attention of a more mature readership.

There were probably countless readers who enjoyed Tolkien's epic but who never communicated their feelings to others. The Tolkien Phenomenon grew from the enthusiasm of those readers who felt the need to share with others the wonders of Middle-earth. These were the Tolkien fans who organized themselves into groups and became known as Tolkien Fandom. The earliest recorded appearance of Tolkien Fandom in the United States was in 1960 when a group of Los Angeles science fiction and fantasy fans organized what they called, somewhat presumptuously, The Fellowship of the Ring. Besides meeting informally in Los Angeles, members of the Fellowship held official annual meetings at two of the World Science Fiction Conventions, and took part at those conventions' masquerades dressed as Middle-earth characters. The Fellowship also sponsored awards for best Tolkien illustrations and sculptures in the convention art shows. But the Fellowship is best remembered for its publication, *I Palantir*. Published by Bruce Pelz and edited by Ted Johnstone (known to his friends as "the hobbit"), *I Palantir* was a typical fanzine. Fanzines, for those not familiar with the term, are amateur magazines published by science fiction and fantasy fans. They range from dittoed and mimeographed efforts to slick printed publications resembling commercial magazines. But in the early 1960s a printed fanzine would have been too expensive, so *I Palantir* was expertly mimeographed. Only four issues were published between 1960 and 1966, but the contents of this fanzine were unique and are still highly prized by Tolkien fans. Included in the issues were serious essays on Tolkien, articles about a possible *Lord of the Rings* movie, conjectures about *The Silmarillion*, haiku poetry written in Tolkien's Elvish script, a comic strip based on the Moria chapter of *The Lord of the Rings*, and even a musical parody entitled "Hello, Frodo!"



Elessar and Evenstar (better known as Aragorn and Arwen) by Annette Harper

© 1978 by Annette Harper

The Fellowship of the Ring remained a relatively small organization and ceased functioning when its members went on to other interests. But in the meantime other fanzines had started publishing Tolkien material. In 1965 Greg Shaw, in California, and Dave Hall, in Missouri, began publishing *Entmoot*, which also lasted for only four issues. *Entmoot*, like *I Palantir*, contained both the scholarly and the fun aspects of Tolkien Fandon. *Entmoot* became a link between the First and the Second Age of the Tolkien Phenomenon. The paperback editions came out while it was being published and, by the fourth issue, Greg Shaw was commenting on the effect of Tolkien on Rock musicians and the hippie subculture.

The Second Age of the Tolkien Phenomenon began in 1965 with a controversy between publishers.[1] Sensing that *The Lord of the Rings* could become a best-seller in the U.S. as a paperback, Ace Books published a paperback edition without the authorization of Tolkien or his American publisher, Houghton-Mifflin. Ace's editor in chief, Donald Wollheim, stated that he had tried to contact Tolkien and his publisher with no results. He also pointed out that Houghton-Mifflin had imported unbound pages of *The Lord of the Rings* from England and failed to take the necessary steps to ensure U.S. copyright. According to existing copyright law, Tolkien's epic then fell into public domain and could be published by anyone in the United States. The Ace edition was issued in May of 1965 and its initial run of 50,000 promptly sold out. Greatly upset by this development, Allen and Unwin arranged for Houghton-Mifflin to publish paperbacks through Ballantine Books and asked Tolkien to write revisions which would, in effect, make the Ballantine paperbacks a new revised edition protected by U.S. copyright. The Ballantine paperbacks didn't come out until October 1965, but they eventually sold better than the Ace edition, not only because of the authorization (promoted by Tolkien fans) but also because they included the vital appendices left out of the Ace edition. Ace ceased publication and finally reached a financial settlement with Tolkien. To this day the repercussions of this copyright controversy have created legal entanglements and rumors that I have yet to fully comprehend.

The Ace-Ballantine dispute undoubtedly drew even more attention to Tolkien's books, but word-of-mouth, from older fans to college students, created an increasing de-

Rivendell, one of the last refuges of the Elves during the Third Age of Middle-earth, by Bernie Zuber.

© 1978 by Bernie Zuber

mand for both *The Hobbit* and *The Lord of the Rings*. On American college campuses Tolkien's books became cult favorites more popular than J.D. Salinger's *The Catcher in the Rye* and William Golding's *Lord of the Flies*.

Perhaps the most important factor was that the paperbacks were published during the Romantic Revolution of the 1960s. Tolkien's books seemed to fit in with the American public's new interest in fantasy, magic, mysticism, Oriental religions, the ecology movement, anti-Vietnam War sentiment, marijuana, LSD trips, psychedelic art, posters, lapel buttons, folk music, and Rock music. Hippies or flower children who went to Love-Ins were often seen reading Tolkien. Magazines and newsletters published for this new subculture borrowed Tolkien names for their titles. Rock musicians wrote music about Middle-earth. At a time when the term "ecology" was making its first big impact, Tolkien's respect for nature, especially his reverence toward trees, was very much appreciated. His stand against dehumanizing industrialization and the pollution of nature (Sauron's Mordor, Saruman's spoiling of the Shire) was interpreted as being antiestablishment by those who were upset by pollution and by industries contributing to the Vietnam War. There were also outright misinterpretations. Many hippies thought the hobbits' pipeweed was really marijuana, and some even thought they could reach Middle-earth by taking LSD trips. Such things would have shocked Tolkien, who was a conservative both philosophically and politically. (He was an avowed monarchist.)

Had he visited the U.S., Tolkien would have been puzzled to see Ballantine's Middle-earth maps and "Come to Middle-earth" posters in head shops, alongside psychedelic posters. Buttons proclaiming "Frodo Lives!" in both English and Elvish, shared shelf space with Peace and Ecology buttons and roach clips.

The enthusiastic reaction to Tolkien's books in the U.S. spread to other countries. A Green Beret officer translated *The Lord of the Rings* into Vietnamese and, as a result, the Vietnamese Second Corps adopted the Red Eye of Sauron as their battle insignia. There was a Tolkien Society in Australia and even a Frodo Society in North Borneo. By 1970 Tolkien's books had been translated into at least six languages.

American readers who were not college students or hippies were kept informed about the Tolkien Phenomenon by many articles in the establishment press. *Life*, *The New Yorker*, *Holiday*, *Seventeen*, and *The Ladies Home Journal* all featured articles about this latest craze. The October 1966 issue of *Diplomat* had a cover caricature of Tolkien with his nose as the doorknob on a round hobbit door. The issue's special Tolkien section included comments by Tolkien, reactions to his books from such diverse personalities as Richard Burton, Lynda Bird Johnson, Timothy Leary and Senator William Proxmire, an awkward map of Middle-earth decorated with "cute" hobbits, and an article on hobbit cookery. An article in the July 2, 1966 issue of *The Saturday Evening Post*, entitled "The Hobbit-forming World of J.R.R. Tolkien," gave a fair report on the activities of Tolkien fans, especially those of the Tolkien Society of America, the largest organization devoted to Tolkien in the 1960s.

The Tolkien Society of America was founded in 1965 by teenage student Richard Plotz. After seeing graffiti written in Tolkien's Elvish on the walls of the New York subway, Plotz put up a notice at Columbia University that asked Tolkien fans to meet by the Alma Mater statue. On a February afternoon, six students braved twenty-degree temperature to discuss Tolkien for an hour. After Plotz advertised for more members in *The New Republic*, meetings were held in members' homes to discuss Middle-earth history, geography, languages, genealogy, etcetera. The members became thoroughly involved in Middle-earth, even adopting the names of some Tolkien characters. Gimli the dwarf was none other than well-known poet W.H. Auden, who had been a student of Tolkien's in Oxford. There was more tendency toward scholarly analysis in the TSA but the atmosphere was as casual as it had been in the earlier fan group in California. Plotz claimed he was not a science fiction fan, but many of those who contacted him were. Plotz wrote to Tolkien and the professor was apparently intrigued by the TSA. For Tolkien's sake, Plotz launched a campaign to promote the authorized Ballantine books and to discourage his members from buying the Ace edition. Plotz also arranged for the sale of Ballantine books and posters through his Society. *The Tolkien Journal*, started as a one-sheet flyer, grew into a quarterly containing news about Tolkien, a letter column and various scholarly articles about Middle-earth.

By 1967 the TSA had over 1,500 members nationwide and overseas. Branches known as "smials" (Tolkien's word for hobbit homes) were formed in various locations. But when Plotz began receiving 50 to 60 letters a day, he realized he couldn't cope with the TSA and also keep up his studies. He turned over leadership of the Society and *The Tolkien Journal* to Ed Meskys, a physics professor at Belknap College, New Hampshire, whose fanzine *Niekas* already contained much Tolkien material. But as *The Tolkien Journal* grew, the quarterly schedule became impossible to keep even for Meskys and his staff. Other Tolkien groups were asked to help. Three issues of *TJ* were published as combined issues with *Orcrist*, the journal of the University of Wisconsin Tolkien Society. Another issue of *TJ* was combined with an issue of *Mythlore*, the journal of the Mythopoeic Society in Southern California. Eventually, in 1972, when Ed Meskys lost his sight after an unsuccessful operation, the Tolkien Society of America officially merged with the Mythopoeic Society. The fifteenth and last issue of *The Tolkien Journal* was entirely done by the staff of *Mythlore*.

Tolkien's reaction to his popularity and to organized Tolkien Fandom was mixed. At first he was obviously pleased by his readers' enthusiasm, and, after all, anyone who created a world in such minute detail must have understood that others would become thoroughly immersed in it. He tried to keep up with the ever-growing stack of mail and gifts sent to him. When Plotz visited Oxford, Tolkien was pleased to grant him an interview. But some fans appeared on Tolkien's doorstep without warning or invitation, and others, ignoring the time difference between the U.S. and England, called him long distance in the middle of the night. Disturbed by these invasions of privacy, Tolkien moved and could be reached only through his publishers. Tolkien also became annoyed when both fans and scholars read things into his works he claimed he had never intended. According to biographer Humphrey Carpenter, Tolkien once referred to his following as "my deplorable cultus."

The beginning of the Third Age of the Tolkien Phenomenon is not as clearly delineated as the beginning of the Second Age. Tolkien's books continued selling very well every year (10 million were sold in the U.S. alone by 1978) but the spotlight of the establishment press was no longer on him. The Romantic Revolution of the 1960s dissolved after Vietnam and Watergate. Love-Ins ceased to attract crowds, and hippies merged into the establishment. Although they remembered Middle-earth with nostalgia, these people went on to create their own contributions to arts and crafts in

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Frodo is attacked by the leader of the Ringwraiths, from Ralph Bakshi's film *The Lord of the Rings.*

a more commercial vein. Those who continued to be active in Tolkien groups gradually entered a quieter and more introspective period. I have arbitrarily chosen 1970 as the beginning of the Third Age because it was the beginning of a new decade and because it was the year the Mythopoeic Society held its first convention, Mythcon I, in conjunction with the Third Annual Tolkien Conference. (The two previous conferences had been held at Belknap College and the University of Wisconsin.) I have also chosen the Mythopoeic Society to exemplify the Third Age of the Tolkien Phenomenon because I have been a member of that organization since its second meeting in November of 1967. I saw the changes in the Society, from the casual atmosphere of the early picnics to the more scholarly approach of the journal *Mythlore*, reflect the mood that developed in the Third Age.

The Mythopoeic Society was founded in Los Angeles by Glen Goodknight. Mythopoeic is derived from the Latin word "mythopoeia," which means "myth-making." Goodknight chose it to describe not only Tolkien's fantasies but also those of his Oxford colleagues C.S. Lewis and Charles Williams. The Mythopoeic Society would be dedicated to the enjoyment and study of these three authors. In addition to being good fantasy literature, their works contained a positive and inspiring philosophy. All three were Christians and their Christian outlook on life was obvious in their writing. Tolkien, Lewis and Williams also belonged to a social group of writers and scholars known as The Inklings, which met every week in Oxford. The relationship of myth and fantasy to Christian philosophy was often discussed at these meetings.

When he founded the Mythopoeic Society perhaps Goodknight wanted to recreate The Inklings, but Southern California is not Oxford and it is impossible to duplicate the special spark that ignites certain intellectual groups. Instead, the Mythopoeic Society attracted enthusiastic Tolkien fans of high school and early college age, and older science fiction and fantasy fans such as myself.

In his "Essay on Fairy Stories" Tolkien stressed the feeling of joy that can be found in both myth and religion. That feeling of joy was very evident in the Mythopoeic picnics celebrating the Destruction of the Ring and the Elvish New Year in the spring, and the common birthday of Bilbo and Frodo in the fall. There were Tolkien trivia quizes, folk music and Maypole dances, and Society members paraded in Middle-earth costumes around the parks where the picnics were held. Onlookers thought they were witnessing another Love-In.

Monthly meetings of the Mythopoeic Society were held at first in the San Gabriel Valley suburbs of Los Angeles. As the Society grew, other branches were formed in California and in other states. The merger with the Tolkien Society of America made the Mythopoeic Society larger than the earlier group. By then, incorporation as a non-profit educational organization and frustrating meetings of branch representatives had managed to entangle the Society in bureaucratic red tape. But the Society's main contributions to the Tolkien Phenomenon were its annual Mythcons and its journal, *Mythlore*.

From the beginning, Mythcons have been hybrids formed of elements from scholarly seminars and more casual science fiction conventions. Much of the program is devoted to the reading of scholarly papers but there are dramatic and musical adaptations of works by the three authors, and art shows, masquerades, and fantasy film showings based on those of science fiction conventions. The formal pageantry of the opening procession, with costumes and banners representing the various branches, developed from the earlier picnic parades. The Mythcon guest of honor list has included fantasy writers and scholars specializing in Tolkien, Lewis and Williams.

Mythlore started out as more of a fanzine than a scholarly journal, especially when its first issues were mimeographed. I was largely responsible for the fannish mood of those early issues with my cartoons reflecting the memberships' interest in other current topics such as *Star Trek* and *Laugh-In*. As associate editor of *Mythlore* I wrote a column relating the activities of the Society to the rest of fantasy and science fiction fandom. But, eventually, *Mythlore* began to include more and more scholarly articles stressing the Christian philosophy of the three authors. Although it has appeared less frequently in recent years, *Mythlore* continues to be worthwhile because of contributions by noted scholars and its attractive layout, which makes good use of illustrations by talented fan artists.

Fan illustrations of Middle-earth really blossomed during the Third Age of the Tolkien Phenomenon. The two examples that illustrate this article are published here for the first time. The portrait of Aragorn and Arwen (under their alternate names of Elessar and Evenstar) was done by Annette Harper, one of *Mythlore*'s most talented contributors. My painting, *Rivendell*, shows one of the last refuges of the Elves in the Third Age of Middle-earth. Another fan artist who contributed frequently to *Mythlore* was Tim Kirk, who gained great popularity among Tolkien fans with his paintings and cartoons of orcs and other Middle-earth creatures. Tim's M.A. project as an art student consisted of a series of illustrations from *The Lord of the Rings*, some of which were later reproduced for the 1975 Tolkien Calendar published by Ballantine.

The Third Age of the Tolkien Phenomenon produced much scholarly analysis. The best of these writings were published in journals and later in book form. Some favorites are *Master of Middle-earth* by Paul Kocher, *Tolkien and the Critics*, essays edited by Isaacs and Zimbardo, *Tolkien's World* by Randel Helms, *J.R.R. Tolkien* by Robley Evans, and *Tolkien and the Silmarillion* by C.S. Kilby. Dr. Kilby, who helped Tolkien with *The Silmarillion* in 1966, is curator of the Wade Collection at Wheaton College, Illinois, where much Tolkien material can be found. There are also two books designed to guide readers through the intricacies of Middle-earth: *The Tolkien Companion* by J.E.A. Tyler and Robert Foster's *Complete Guide to Middle-earth*. Humphrey Carpenter's biography of Tolkien, the only one authroized by his family, does an excellent job of relating the man's work to his life, but another unauthorized biography by Daniel Grotta-Kurska has more details about Tolkien Fandom, even though there are errors in the research.

Tolkien fans in England were slower to organize than their American counterparts, but, finally, in 1968 fantasy writer Vera Chapman founded the British Tolkien Society. Its monthly meetings have often been held in London pubs, and once a year the members gather for an "Oxonmoot" when they visit Tolkien's favorite haunts in Oxford. The membership, however, has never reached the size of the Tolkien Society of America. In 1975, feeling the need for another organization devoted solely to Tolkien, Phil and Marci Helms of Michigan started the American Tolkien Society. Other Tolkien groups have since sprung up across the nation, including the American Hobbit Association near Chicago, Thorin & Co. in Pennsylvania, which publishes its own Middle-earth calendars, and the Tolkien Fellowships, which I started in Los Angeles in 1977. My newsletter, *The Westmarch Chronicle*, is published bimonthly to keep members up to date with recent Tolkien events.

Tolkien fans waited for many years to read *The Silmarillion*. Although he had first started writing his tales of the First and Second Ages of Middle-earth as far back as World War I, Tolkien kept revising his notes for the rest of his life. In 1973 Tolkien died after a severe ulcer attack. While his fans gathered for memorial services, Tolkien was buried next to his wife in Oxford's Roman Catholic cemetery. (The inscription on their tombstone bears the names of Beren and Luthien, two lovers from *The Silmarillion* whom Tolkien and his wife identified with.) Tolkien's son, Christopher, was left with the task of editing his father's notes so that Allen and Unwin could publish the book. *The Silmarillion* was finally published in September, 1977, and immediately became a hardcover best seller.

1977 also marked the beginning of the Fourth Age of the Tolkien Phenomenon, the age in which the full potential of Tolkien's creation is about to be realized in products and story-telling media other than his books. I have chosen 1977 because it was the year in which a TV adaptation of *The Hobbit* was broadcast to the American public.

Producers Arthur Rankin and Jules Bass based their animated TV production of *The Hobbit* on the original edition of the book, rather than the revised one, most likely due

Boromir defending Merry and Pippin from the Orcs in *The Lord of the Rings.*

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to the legal entanglements dating from the 1960s. Designs were created in the U.S. and animated in Japan, but the results proved disappointing to most Tolkien fans. Not only was Tolkien's story terribly abridged for TV but the animation was limited. During the Riddle-game, for instance, Bilbo and an awkward, frog-like Gollum never even made eye contact. The soundtrack voices and the songs, which sounded like American folk music, didn't help much either.

Back in the late 1950s Tolkien fans were already trying to figure out how a film of *The Lord of the Rings* could be done. California artists Ron Cobb and Jon Lackey were among those who worked on paintings and scale models for a film which were shown to Tolkien by science fiction editor Forrest Ackerman. Tolkien reportedly liked the art better than the proposed script. But nothing ever came of this project and the art was lost. The 1966 Tolkien article in *Diplomat* showed two sketches by Czech artist Jiri Trnka for an animated version of *The Hobbit* which was never made. Even the Beatles considered filming *The Lord of the Rings*, with Paul as Frodo, Ringo as his faithful servent Sam, George as the wizard Gandalf, and John as the slithering Gollum. Rumors that Walt Disney studio planned to film Tolkien's epic proved to be untrue. In 1969 Tolkien sold the film rights to *The Lord of the Rings* to United Artists. When director John Boorman failed in his attempt to do the film for UA, he used his locations for *Zardoz* instead.

Animation director Ralph Bakshi, who had first read Tolkien's epic in the 1950s, kept trying to convince UA that he should do it as an animated feature. Meanwhile he became famous for his X-rated animated films, *Fritz the Cat* and *Heavy Traffic*. Finally, after other projects had failed, UA gave Bakshi the go-ahead. Saul Zaentz, the co-producer of Oscar-winner *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest*, also a long-time Tolkien fan, decided to produce Bakshi's film. Full production was announced in January of 1977.

Tolkien fans should be pleased to know that Bakshi is staying close to the spirit of *The Lord of the Rings*. The animation will be full animation using rotoscoping, a process by which animation is based on live-action footage. This technique was used to some extent by Bakshi for his previous fantasy film, *Wizards*, especially in the battle sequences. But *The Lord of the Rings* is entirely rotoscoped, which means that Bakshi had to shoot an entire live-action film to ensure that his animators would be able to capture the flow of realistic movement throughout. Bakshi has employed some fine artists for his past films and for this project he hired even more talented designers and animators. The art shown in advance promotional material has already received very good reaction from Tolkien fans.

The screenplay was written by Chris Conkling, a young writer first hired by Bakshi as a Tolkien researcher, and later revised by fantasy writer Peter Beagle, well-known for his introductions to Tolkien's books. The voices were recorded by British actors and should certainly sound appropriate. Leonard Rosenman, Oscar-winner for his music in *Barry Lyndon* and *Bound for Glory*, has composed a score for full symphony orchestra, a chorus, and an ensemble of medieval instruments.

The Lord of the Rings is planned as two films, with the first film (scheduled for release in November 1978) ending after the Battle of Helm's Deep, when Frodo, Sam and Gollum enter Mordor. The second production is slated to follow about a year and a half later. Between the two, several merchandising items based on Bakshi's film will be marketed, ranging from posters and T-shirts to more expensive collector's items. National magazines have busily prepared articles about Tolkien and the film. The Fourth Age of the Tolkien Phenomenon is now in full swing.

At the core of the Tolkien Phenomenon is the special Magic of Middle-earth that has persisted through the years and deeply touched his readers. Generations of Tolkien fans around the world have felt spontaneously inspired by his books, so the Tolkien Phenomenon is bound to go on for many more ages. □

Freelancing

By Clay Geerdes

Anyone who works on his own in this country, particularly in the creative or expressive arts, faces a lot of problems. I'm going to talk about writing, because that is what I do, but all of this applies equally to cartooning.

First off, I hate being a salesman. In college, I just wrote. I kept endless journals filled with reactions to all of the various strains of philosophy that came my way in courses I took and discussions in which I participated in the campus commons. By the time I reached grad school at San Francisco State, I would define myself as a writer when asked by others. Invariably the next question was, "Oh, really, what have you published?" to which I would have to reply that I had not yet been published. "Oh," they would say, giving me that look every artist and writer knows so well—the sarcastic one which typecasts the speaker as a phony.

Publication defines an artist or a writer in America; hence one becomes hungry for exposure in print. The only greater high for a writer than his first byline is his first publisher's check. That is the moment of truth. It says nothing about the style or the quality of writing, because the writer may have done a job to get that initial exposure that he will never do again in his writing career.

He may have written free. The underground press got a lot of freebies a few years back when everyone was into writing and drawing for other heads. Many of us, more sober now, realize that people like Max Scherr are still making money off our labor with never a thought to any back royalties, if indeed there was any payment in the first place. The underground syndicate had a deal that said whatever was run in one underground member paper could be reprinted free by all the others. This was a good trip for publishers, and a bad one for artists and writers.

The first phase for me was that desire for exposure, for recognition, for clippings to show my friends to prove that I was in fact a writer and not a phony. The second phase came about when I no longer cared about proving myself to others. I began to experiment with styles, to play with words. I would reconstruct the entire atmosphere of an afternoon on Haight Street by using nothing but fragments, images. Jerry Garcia standing in front of the drugstore toking on the last of a joint that just left Pigpen's grubby hand a second before. Old Ukranian folks trying to decipher the lettering on a Wes Wilson poster in the window of Mnasidika. Janis Joplin trying on a pair of sunglasses that were supposed to have belonged to Jackie Kennedy in a shop called In Gear. "Well, look, man, if you think you've got the clap, get your skinny ass down to the free clinic and get checked out, like you don't want to lay a trip like that on your brothers and sisters, 'cause that would be a real bummer."

In the late 1960s everybody was heavily into "doing their own thing," and for some this was simple. Give them a j and they would go and sit on Hippie Hill in the park and blow soap bubbles all afternoon. But for others it wasn't that simple. A cartoonist has to have his ink and bristol and a photographer his film and paper. Unless you're a rip-off, that means the money has to come in from somewhere. In 1969, underground writers got space rates that were lower than those paid in the 1930s.

I have no feelings about commercial art or writing one way or the other. It just is. Crumb does album covers. I review comic books. Commercial work pays the rent, but it is somewhat less than exciting. A year ago I started reviewing books again, not that I cared that much about reviewing, but because I needed the intellectual stimulus. It's a discipline to read and review a book, like working a crossword puzzle. Phase one, I got the bylines and recognition; phase two, I went anonymous and learned all of the forms: articles, reviews, short stories, columns. As a novice I thought it was talent. Today I know better. Talent often keeps you out. What's more important are connections.

As a naive young writer-photographer, I spent many useless dollars sending manuscripts and pix to mags, collecting for my trouble a mundane and unimpressive bunch of rejection slips. None of these ever explained all I wanted to know: why the manuscript wasn't accepted. Not much education in that. Meanwhile, I kept on making the same mistakes.

Major mags rarely buy freelance material. Most of their issues are thematic, and the lead articles are all assigned to the bigger name writers as a rule. Names sell, unknowns don't. Which is why one reads a lot of crap hacked out by name writers while beautiful stories often go unnoticed in little mags of small circulation. Today there are thousands of people who think of themselves as writers and artists and many of them submit material to mags and papers. The volume is impossible to deal with. Many mags simply hire people to sort the mail down to those people that are known and the others. The others get their manuscripts back if there's a self-addressed stamped envelope enclosed. A few publishers who can afford it will send the stuff back anyway, but most won't.

Mags that do buy a little freelance material hire readers to break down the incoming mail. Stuff that is incorrect in format (hand-written, pencil-written, polaroid snapshots, ink drawings on lined notebook paper) is rejected immediately. Material that shows the writer or artist knows how to submit for publication is considered. A reader will glance over the first page. If it catches his interest, he'll read the rest. If not, clip on a rejection slip, and move on to the next one.

If a reader does find some gold in the slush pile, there is no guarantee that the writer will ever see print. There is nothing to keep a reader or editor from xeroxing a manuscript and ripping off the idea before he sends it back to the writer with a form rejection slip. This is a common practice with some publications, and, contrary to what the ingenue writer may believe, it is a relatively safe one. Suppose you live in Baton Rouge, Louisiana. You send a short story to a mag in Chicago. It is returned in six weeks and you just send it out again. Meanwhile, that story is retitled and re-typed with a new name and location changes and is sold to a local Chicago mag that is not distributed in Baton Rouge.

The same thing can happen to a cartoonist. His art may be shot on negatives which are later sold to a pirate in Europe. The illegal edition may be sold privately in England or France with the American artist never knowing a thing about it. The freelancer has no way of protecting against rip-offs. Nobody can look at all of the mags and books that appear throughout the world each week, let alone read everything in them. Most writers specialize in specific subjects, and it's enough for them to try to keep up on

everything in their field.

What you have to do is keep the guts of your article or idea to yourself until you've got an agreement with a publisher. That means using carefully phrased query letters and teasers. If you're unknown and unpublished, anything goes, because you've got to get an editor's attention and keep it or you're not going to get into his mag. You have to learn the business, too, don't think you don't. You have to know who makes the final decisions on the staff, where the power is, and there is no such thing as knowing too much about the internal workings of the publication. Every magazine is an extension of the publisher who runs it. If a publisher likes your stuff and wants it in, it's in, regardless of how an editor may feel about it. Freelancers usually deal with editors, and not with publishers, but never doubt that the overall philosophy of the publisher is the controlling factor. Either or both may be writers, but you can bet that the editor is a writer whether the publisher is or not.

This brings in a competitive factor. I said that "talent often keeps you out" and I meant that in reference to your relationship to your editor. If he reads your stuff and sees that it is better than what he does, he is threatened on several levels, and he may try to figure out a way to reject your stuff so that it does not appear in the same mag with his. He may be an unsuccessful freelancer who doesn't want to be an editor, but took the job to pay the rent. On the other hand, he may be a product of university journalism with a built-in prejudice against freelancers. I became familiar with this cliquish phenomenon when I was teaching. Those who joined fraternities and sororities banded together and rejected all the other students as GDIs (God Damned Independents). Where school papers are concerned, this translates the same: you work on the paper for the privilege to fill the space with your own prose. You're not going to give any ink to those outside.

Another way of looking at this is territorial boundaries. When R. Crumb did his first **Zap Comics**, he expressed in an interview (**Promethean** No. 5) that he hoped **Zap** would open the field to new cartoonists again. But what happened was that a few cartoonists joined with him by the third issue, claimed the territory, and all subsequent submissions were rejected. This lead to the formation of other titles and companies.

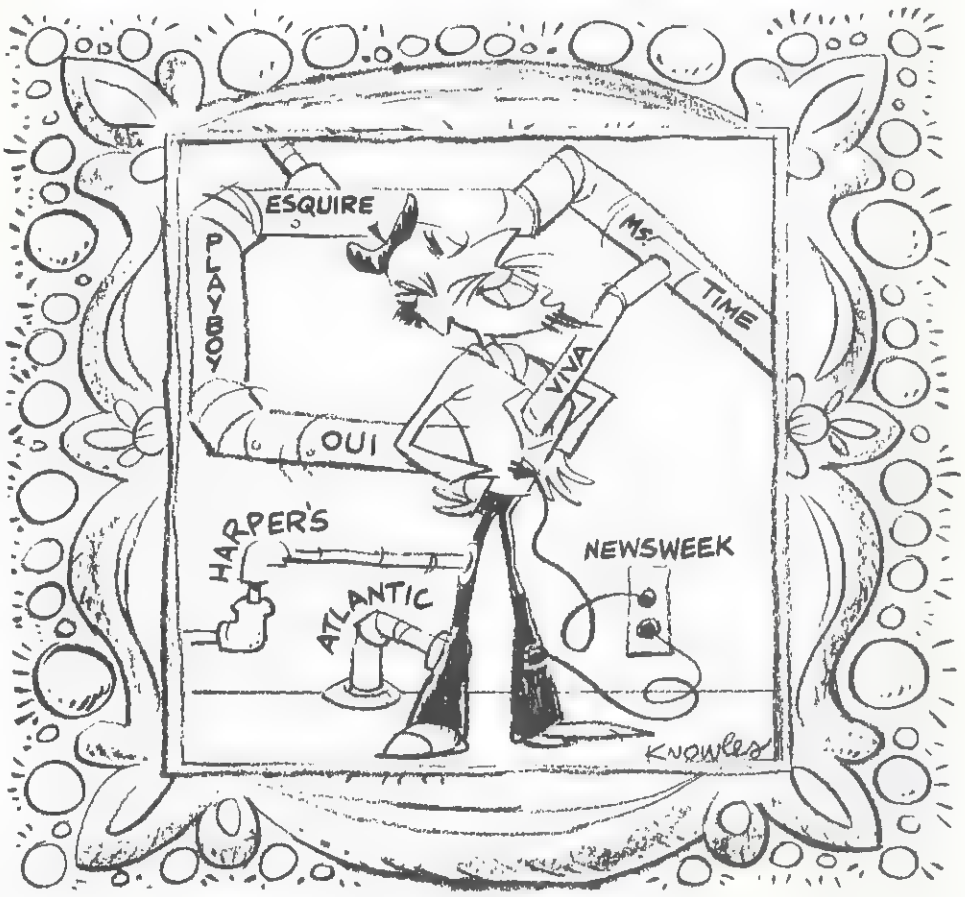
Territories are anathema to writers with a catholicity of interests, however much they may be accepted for economic reasons. If you opt for a career as an artist or writer in this country, you will continually run into the conflict between what you want to write or draw and what an editor will print. If you're facile, you pick up the various styles and use them to pay the rent while you work on your own projects.

The language tells you a lot. A freelancer **submits**, and an editor **accepts** or **rejects.** This puts the writer in the position of a dependent child and elevates the editor to symbolic parent. There are some things you can know about editors that may make you more aware about why they do what they do. They are people just like you and they have personal lives. At the same time, they are employees, responsible to whatever guidelines have been dictated by the publisher who owns the paper or mag they work for. The publication is an extension of the publisher, and when you read it you get to know him. He is printing what he wants to print and he's going to buy more of the same. He may talk a lot about creativity and ingenuity, but those are simply in-words, best ignored by the writer seeking to get a foot in the door. An editor looks for the same stuff he's already got and he throws back anything unfamiliar to him, i.e., creative work.

With the exception of an occasional sociological or political article, men's mags demand a sex angle in everything they print. It's all been said over and over from **Esquire** and **Stag** in the 1930s to **Playboy** and **Knight** in the 1950s, and what editors do is recycle the same material over and over. Panel gags are re-drawn and some are re-captioned. It's safe to gamble that the reader has a poor memory, particularly if he's not in the business. Sex papers re-run the same photographs every two or three months. This way they save money and increase profit. Daily comic strip art in the papers may be recycled. In the Scribner's edition of **Bringing Up Father** there are two identical strips that have different routines lettered in the balloons.

An editor's job is to fill up his mag and to make it look as good as possible with what he's got. He has to write a lot of the stuff himself, and sometimes he winds up re-writing a lot of the stuff he has bought for the issue. Though he doesn't know any more about who the readers are than a publisher does, he has to work as though he were aiming at a specific readership. He knows who he thinks the readers are and he may or may not have any respect for them. Some editors serve up a mag as if they were slopping hogs. They have literary aspirations and they think that anyonw who is weird enough to want to read a sex mag deserves only the worst. But the freelancer may never assume that attitude. He has to take it all seriously. The grottiest piece of crap has to be done just right, just hard or soft enough to get the publisher's seal of approval. The ultimate crime is writing an academic piece for a pop mag. Avant-garde nonsexist prose in unsalable, particularly when it is written by a man.

Editors watch trends carefully, but they don't change the basic style of a magazine. If it appears worth the gamble, a new mag is begun as it was in the case of



Freelance writer with connections.

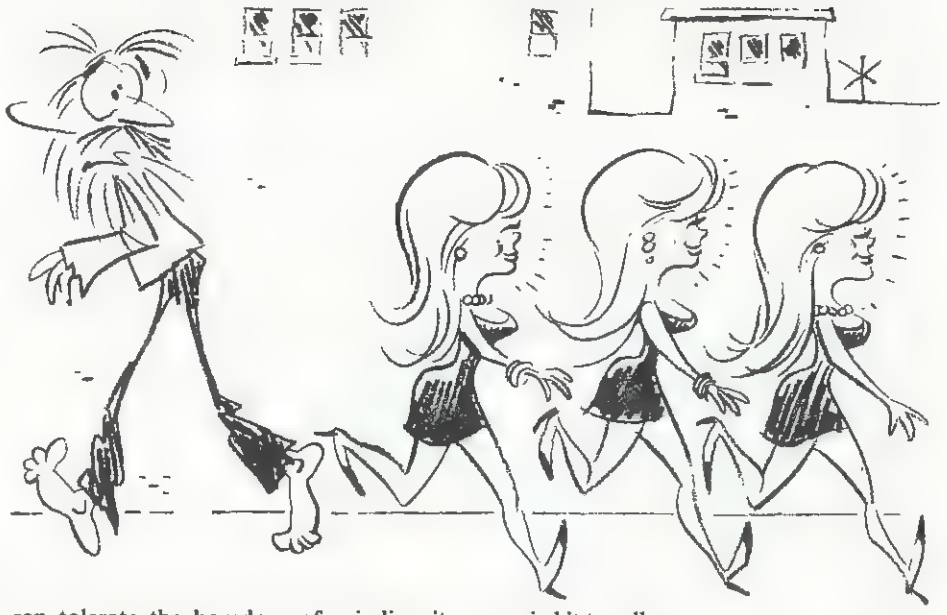
Viva, Bob Guccione's answer to **Ms.** When it became clear to **Playboy** that their 1950s college readership had grown into a class of middle-aged professionals, they simply started **Oui** to pick up the new readers, assimilating a lot of layout techniques and eyeball kicks from the underground papers.

Where do you start? Anywhere. Pick an image off the top of your brain and you're started. Non-fiction is fiction and fiction is non-fiction. If what you've got to say is the truth, fictionalize it and call it a novel like Mary Loos did in **The Beggars Are Coming.** Focus on anger and lust and humiliation, strong emotions, and write them out while they are happening to you. If you wait, you'll find yourself unable to get the flavor. Reason just screws up good drama, and if you wait and get introspective it won't come out clean.

Non-fiction is always a lot of crap. Uncensored non-fiction is so rare, it's not even worth bothering with. I've written hundreds of fictional non-fiction articles for magazines. It's all made-up or inconsequential. When I used to knock out articles for the girly mags, I'd do the photography, look at it, and write the copy around the pictures, making up the name of the woman, the name of the writer, and the idea. Some of it was real reportage, but it might have come from as many as a dozen different sources. The idea comes first and it's always a variation on the same simple idea because all mags buy what they already have. They don't want anything different and they wouldn't recognize it if it came along. They want slick nude shots of standard-looking women, and they want some witty commentary to justify the pictures. In a photo-fantasy spread, you need not write anything, but those fantasies are usually dictated by the editor. The whole magazine is the publisher's fantasy and he has usually chosen his editor because the guy convinced him he would come across with the party line. Once in a while you may slide through an article on trout fishing or something that isn't sexual in content, but it's rare, and if you work steadily you're grinding out sex articles.

But what about **Harper's** and **Atlantic** and the "respectable" mags? I don't consider them freelance markets any more than I do the syndicated papers. They buy such a small percentage from the mails that I gave up on them long ago. The outside material that is not assigned usually comes from name writers. Face it, there isn't much space and there are a lot of people competing for what little there is. Mass circulation mags have to buy names to sell. The girly mags sell sex, not names, but even these prefer to deal with writers on a regular basis. Once you know the format, length, dos and don'ts of a slick, you can keep on selling it as long as you can tolerate the boredom of grinding it out.

Teenage liberation from the mores of radical-hip parents.



What about poetry, short stories and novels? Have a good time, buddy. Of the three, the novel is the best bet, but you'd better be in New York and aggressive enough to get past the secretaries. The majority of the big houses don't even accept manuscripts any more. They tell you to get a literary agent, and that's as hard as getting in to see an editor of Random House. The slicks are always overstocked on fiction, and they don't buy poetry.

It takes a good hustler, a fast thinker, and a quick mover to make it in freelancing. Take faddism. Most pop writing deals with it. To really get into it you have to know the texture of contemporary society, the fashions and the attitudes. When I got on a bus in Berkeley a few weeks ago and saw five or six teenaged girls wearing lipstick, powder, mascara and perfume, I knew it was a trend, a new thing, but I knew that only because I am familiar with Berkeley mores and know that the women in town haven't worn make-up since the mid-1960s when the plain style of radicalism made lipstick and rouge unfashionable. Liberation meant throwing a lot of things out, including lipstick and bras and Toni home permanent kits. For the teenagers from Berkeley High, the make-up symbolizes liberation from the mores of their radical-hip parents, but a stranger to the area would not know that.

As a freelancer I've been able to sell a lot of articles because I can walk down Telegraph Avenue and immediately spot what is different. Fashion spies do the same. One day a woman splits a pair of jeans and sews a piece of colorful material inside to create a jean-skirt. The next season, jean-skirts are mass-marketed through one of the chains because a fashion spy saw the trend on the street and copied it to sell.

Writers work that way. See a new trend, photograph it, write it up and sent it to the mags in hopes that you've made it onto the editor's desk first. The longer articles may be researched later if you get a bite.

I used a fashion example, but I could have used politics, because Berkeley is a city where belief and fashion mesh. Radical women don't wear make-up. If you see a woman walking on the campus in a mini-skirt, she's a secretary in one of the more conservative departments on the UC campus. An article on the way fashion reflects politics and vice versa has a chance in dozens of mags. Watch faddism.

As a street reporter in the 1960s, I knocked out some crazy pop sociology. One of my articles (Los Angeles **Free Press**) was titled "Is Long Hair A Psycho-Sexual Threat to the State?" It dealt with what was then a new androgyny. The Berkeley of '67 was divided between the long-haired hippies and the short-haired jocks. The war between hip and straight was in full swing. Hippies were getting high and digging electric music while the straights were holding on to what was left of the Kingston Trio. The cops were all short-hairs, and, in their passion to break up street demonstrations and marches, they seemed to delight in pulling long hair and beating the heads attached to it. Always the focus was on the hair. Today we take long hair and beards and nose-rings for granted, but in 1967 a long-haired man on short-hair turf meant blood on the sidewalk. A lot of women liked and accepted the long-hair right away, but macho men had a hell of a time with it. What were those guys, fags? And why did the girls hang with them if they were faggots? It's historical fact that hundreds of young guys got stomped on in the mid-1960s not because they were pro-Lenin or Mao, but because they grew

their locks long and triggered a severe hate response from the athletes and the cops.

Psychedelic drugs revived beliefs in astrology and magic, and I wrote an article called "The Magic Age: We Want the World and We Want It Now." This one dealt with the impatience young people were expressing in the slow processes of the older culture. On acid everything was beautiful and spontaneous and relationships were immediate and entire lifetimes came and went on the surface of a drop of water on a green leaf. But when hip folks dropped acid around straights, they often unleashed monsters of competition, hatred, jealousy, envy and other side-effects of businesscult, causing what was called a bummer or bad trip.

The beginning freelancer often takes magazines like **The Writer** or **Writer's Digest** literally. Theoretically it's all good information, but in practice things don't always work the way the magazines tell you. Take query letters. You can send them as often as you like, but this does not guarantee anyonw will answer them. Or, more often, that they will answer them while your subject is still ready to talk or while your idea is still topical. The rule today, whether you're a known writer or not, is: no answer, no interest. I usually get answers right away or in less than ten days when a magazine wants what I have. It's logical that with increased volume of submissions due to a more educated public (hence more would-be writers in the field) coupled with a decreased staff (since most mags have cut their staffs) editors would eliminate all the busywork they could, namely answering queries about things they can't use. As a writer, I would say if you don't get a reply or a call in ten days, offer the article somewhere else.

This is not as easy as it sounds, particularly where photography or art are concerned. I offered a spread of pictures on a film to **Playboy** in February of 1977. No reply in April, so I sent a follow-up letter. Nothing. A second letter. Nothing. Six months later I got my photographs back without comment. The September issue of **Oui** carried a spread of pictures on the star of the film, giving her a different name, and no mention was made of the film. What happened behind the scenes? Obviously an insider managed to keep me, the freelancer, from getting the space.

On a number of separate occasions I have submitted ideas to **Playboy** only to have them ripped off. What happens is simple. I sent a proposal with a selection of pictures of the Free Store Theater Company to **Playboy.** A few weeks passed and I got my stuff back with a standard rejection letter. A couple of months later, August of 1976, **Playboy** had a crew of photographers in Cotati shooting Free Store doing their show in the plaza. This is dirty pool, but a freelancer has no way to

A bad trip—unleashed monsters of competition, hatred, jealousy and envy.

protect his material. In this case the theater, performing in the public park, is in the public domain and anyone can take pictures and publish them. So even if I'd had more than a word-of-mouth agreement with the company's director I could not have stopped others from ripping off the story.

A year or so ago I sent an article and a selection of underground comix to **Gallery.** I heard nothing and got nothing back from them. Some months later an article on the comix appeared in **Gallery** by another writer, and illos were used from the comix I had sent.

For a while I was writing short reviews of comix which I would send to mags like **Hustler** and **Cheri** and **New Pink,** but I stopped doing this after the comix were ripped off from me and reviews were written around them by staffers.

The point I'm making is that a freelancer cannot protect his material or his ideas. He can sue, but can he really? And does he want to spend the time and energy in such a negative manner? I've never wanted to.

"Payment on publication." Nearly all magazine purchase orders and contracts read this way, along with a lot of stuff that gives the magazine all kinds of rights and privileges for nothing. This means my check ought to be in the mail when the magazine hits the stands, but that never happens. Earlier this year I signed a 30-day contract for a $200 kill fee from **Cheri.** It took me five letters and six months to collect, and then the company sent me only $150. Why did they burn me for $50? Because I wanted what I had coming according to their own contract?

An editor in Chicago called me earlier this year and wanted photos and copy for **New Pink,** a small-size sex magazine for men. I sent along some stuff, it came out in the magazine, and I had to write letters and beg for my money. Finally I got a check and the editor called and wanted some more material. I sent a lot of slides and a couple of articles, all of which have been in recent issues of the magazine. I haven't been paid in four months, and I'm still writing letters.

Several other magazines owe me money. As a freelancer I haven't been out of print for ten years. I should be making a good living right now, but try to get the money after you've done the work. The staff gets paid every month and the writers who are **there** get checks, but the freelancer in the field, the guy who provides the kind of variety the magazines would not have if it were not for his work, gets his last if at all. If anyone has to wait until the next month, he does. And the return is so little.

So why do I stay in such a frustrating business? Why go on dealing with people who have no ethics? I have no simple answer. I write because that's what I do and what I enjoy doing. I would prefer to write fiction, but there is no market for fiction. I like theater and comics and photography and parties and happenings and art and I'm involved in many different scenes all of the time and I wouldn't have it any other way.

My best writing is in my letters and journals. The non-sex articles I have sent to magazines have all been rejected and I'm rarely allowed to tell the truth outside my own publication, **Comix World,** and in a few scattered fanzines. I'd like to start my own magazine, but I've never had any money, and I've never had any money because I always go in the direction of the story whether the money is there or not. I ought to live in New York, because that's the only town where a writer makes a decent living, but I love the bay area and the negative aspects of the east are stronger for me than the positive ones.

Do I sound discouraged? Actually, I'm not. My line of work brings more personal satisfaction than editing or teaching, particularly when I manage to get some reality into print. ■

"Freelancing" reprinted from Comix World, a newsletter relative to contemporary underground and alternative comix, a continuing history of the medium—written, edited and published by Clay Geerdes, P.O. Box 7081, Berkeley, California 94707. 24-issue Subscription $5.50, $10 for 48. Inquire about back issues and/or ads.

THE MOVIE POSTER ART OF
FRANK FRAZETTA
BY
WILLIAM
STOUT

American illustrator Frank Frazetta is known primarily for the dramatic fantasy subjects that enhance paperbacks and Warren magazines *Creepy* and *Eerie*. Within the last few years his posters, calendars and Peacock Press/Bantam Book collections have spread his name and fame far beyond the limits of science fiction fandom.

It's not commonly known that Frazetta frequently went past these stylistic limitations and produced record album covers, men's magazine illustrations and comic book art. But there's one genre he delved into that exposed his work to more of the public than any other graphic medium. Ironically, this genre has been the least noticed and examined — movie posters and related film subjects such as advertising art for TV productions. Reproduced in nearly every newspaper in the country, Frazetta's film and TV promotions provide a chance to study an interesting variety of styles, especially his lesser known humorous endeavors.

Frazetta's first movie job was for *What's New, Pussycat?* in 1965. Frank got the assignment when an art director saw the Ringo Starr caricature Frank had done for the back cover of *Mad* #90. His art for *Pussycat* is reminiscent of his *Li'l Abner* work for Al Capp in the 1950s. The more familiar Frazetta touch is apparent in the cracked stone archway and in the crumbled rock at the first policeman's feet in the A sheet. Frank's enthusiasm for the Wagnerian Brun-Hilde type is evident in his execution of the surface texture and design of her Conan-esque ax and armament in the B poster. The A sheet for *What's New, Pussycat?* was used for the Burt Bacharach soundtrack LP. The B was used for the paperback novelization as well as for the picture sleeve of Tom Jones' hit single. According to the June 1977 *Esquire* article "The Incredible Paintings of Frank Frazetta," he was paid $5000 for the art. Frank remarked that the money was "a whole year's pay, earned in one afternoon" — a definite hint of good things to come.

Frank's next poster also came in 1965. *The Secret of My Success*, allowed Frazetta the luxury of painting a ghoulish mad scientist and some particularly spidery spiders. The color in this poster seems unusually low-key when compared with the brightness of his others. The pressbook includes an illustration by Frank that is different from the 1-sheet art.

After The Fox resulted in two of Frazetta's finest posters. This 1966 production was Frank's second Peter Sellers film and he did Sellers fine justice with many excellent caricatures. Victor Mature was right up Frank's alley, too, having previously drawn him as the man about to be branded on a 1950 comic book cover, *Tim Holt* #17. Frazetta's rendering of the German Shepherd in the A version is particularly sensitive. In the B sheet Frank has delivered some strange and amusing bits of business, most notably the nude statue and the wild-eyed bird. The B art for *After The Fox* was used as the sound track cover illustration. The back cover was the A in black & white.

Hotel Paradiso (1966) is a prime example of Frazetta's movie art at its slickest. Careful attention has been paid to a variety of textures. Picture details abound, such as the swollen vein on the whistle-blowing cop's neck. Also used as a soundtrack cover, this piece is distinguished not only by its textural and visual depth but by the fact that Frank has painted Gina Lollobrigida with two left feet.

Frazetta's art for *The Busy Body* (1967) was another all-star cast running in unexplained pursuit (of the box office?), a style pioneered by Jack Davis with his mob scene illustration for *It's A Mad, Mad, Mad, Mad World* and others. Stylistically *The Busy Body* is a cross between *What's New, Pussycat?* and *Hotel Paradiso*. The graveyard and skull-like heads of the corpses are a few of Frank's typical *Creepy* touches. A cropped version was used for the paperback novelization.

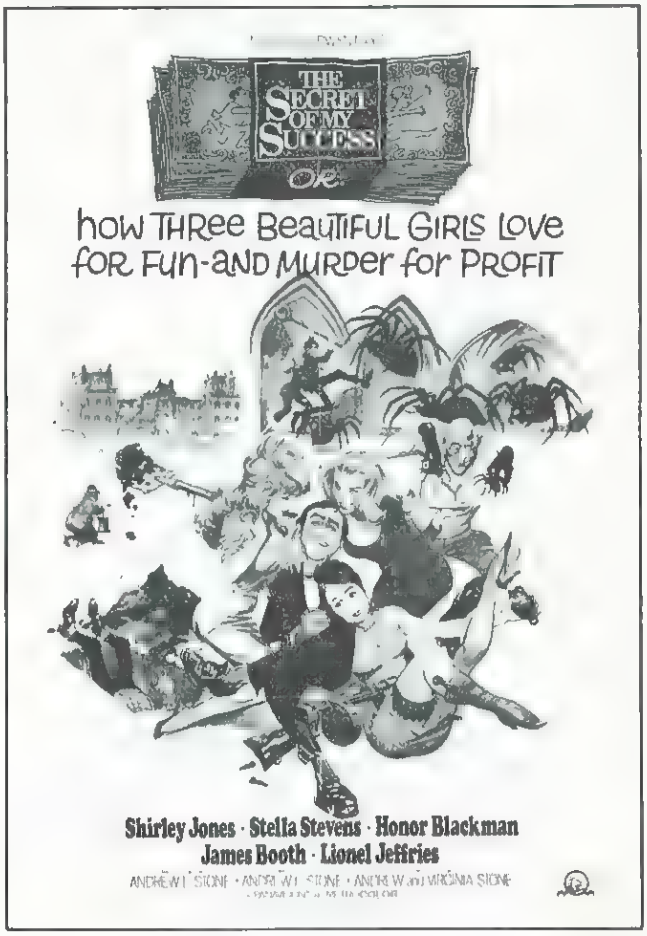
Art for *The Fearless Vampire Killers* (1967) was a team effort. Frank did the cartoon that appears below the vampire painting, illustrator unknown. The subject matter just right for Frank's style. The figures are all a delight,

even to the little jumping silhouette far in the back. Frazetta produced a charming likeness of Sharon Tate, though his Polanski is less successful—which may not be Frank's fault. Poster artists are often given the most abysmal photo reference. Also, many of the actors and actresses are drawn before they've become well-known faces. At the time Frazetta did *Vampire Killers,* Polanski's face was virtually unknown in this country. Frank has said he enjoyed doing *Vampire Killers,* mainly because the movie people didn't tamper with the finished art.

Frazetta did two quick and nearly identical paintings for 1967's *Fitzwilly,* both rather undistinguished in the drawing and rendering. The unusual feature is the fact that the heads of the four stars are photographs pasted over the artwork and retouched by Frank. He was quite unhappy with this approach, a demand of the studio. Though only one painting was used for 1-sheet art, both adorned the soundtrack LP as front and back covers.

The Night They Raided Minsky's (1968) is one of Frazetta's most complex movie pieces. The initial version gave flight to Frank's sexy wit—a little too much flight for United Artists. Many changes were made, the subtler ones being the removal of the panties dangling from the legs of one of the marquee girls, and the sad substitution for the nippled balloons. Also, before the film's release, Bert Lahr died, hence the reason for exchanging heads with Norman Wisdom—thus giving the living Wisdom more prominence. This was Frank's second portrayal of pop singer Rod Stewart's femme fatale, Britt Ekland. A cropped version fo the poster art appeared on the original motion picture soundtrack LP, and an extra drawing, not shown on any of the posters, was included in the pressbook.

The Secret of My Success

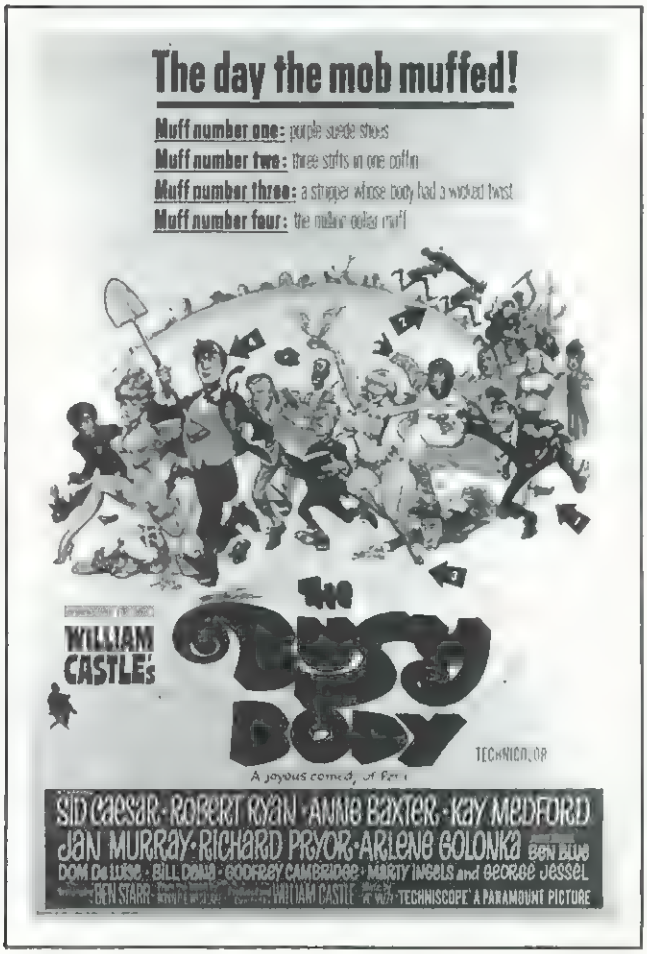

THE SECRET OF MY SUCCESS
how THREE BeauTIFUL GIRLS LOVE
FOR FUN-AND MURDER for PROFIT
Shirley Jones · Stella Stevens · Honor Blackman
James Booth · Lionel Jeffries

Yours, Mine and Ours, also from 1968, was a light mom-and-pop effort. Its distinction is that the poster art consisted of three separate paintings. The soundtrack LP also sports the 1-sheet art.

Hidden in an oval at the bottom of *The Fastest Guitar Alive* (1968) is part of a loose, quick Frazetta. The full painting is represented on the sound track album cover. Strangely, its main figure bears no resemblance to Roy Orbison, the film's star. Apparently this was intentional. *Fastest Guitar,* as with *Vampire Killers,* was another combination of two artists, the Orbison illustrator unknown.

1971's *Mrs. Pollifax—Spy* is among Frazetta's most ambitious movie paintings. It's not done in Frank's usual watercolorish technique, but is a full, rich and fairly opaque oil painting. *Pollifax* exhibits a good, solid, castle-style fortress, delightful goats and those mushrooms that have become one of Frazetta's trademarks. The art also appeared on the paperback cover.

The bulk of Frazetta's fame is supported by a style and content that's rarely seen in Frank's movie art. His 1973 work for *Luana* is one of the rare exceptions. The A poster got additional public exposure as the cover of *Vampirella* #31, and was also the cover for paperback novelization of the film. At one point during the *Luana* job, the film was cancelled for release. Frank had already been paid for the two finished paintings, yet he hated to see them go unused. This, coupled with a tight deadline for his second series of Ace Books' Burroughs covers prompted Frazetta to change the black panther in the B to a sabertooth. Frank then sold the altered painting to Ace as the cover for their 1973 edition of *Savage Pellucidar.* A short time later, much to Frank's surprise, both the movie and the posters were released. Unfortunately, extra loin cloth material was crudely added to the shapely thighs of the B Luana by one of the movie distribution company's staff artists. An un-cropped version of the B painting appeared


The day the mob muffed!
Muff number one: purple suede shoes
Muff number two: three girls in one coffin
Muff number three: a stripper whose body had a wicked twist
Muff number four: the million dollar man!
WILLIAM CASTLE's
The Busy Body
TECHNICOLOR
A joyous comedy of Peril
SID CAESAR · ROBERT RYAN · ANNE BAXTER · KAY MEDFORD
JAN MURRAY · RICHARD PRYOR · ARLENE GOLONKA and BEN BLUE
DOM DeLUISE · BILL DANA · GODFREY CAMBRIDGE · MARTY INGELS and George Jessel
BEN STARR · WILLIAM CASTLE · TECHNISCOPE · A PARAMOUNT PICTURE

as the back cover to *The Burroughs Bulletin* #30. Frank also painted a pre-release 8½ x 11 teaser card just prior to his final *Luana* 1-sheets. The teaser is basically a painted sketch, very quick and loose in execution. Frazetta recalls the *Luana* art with fondness as the only movie paintings that fully satisfied him.

Mixed Company (1974) was another domestic scene on the order of *Yours, Mine and Ours,* only simpler.

By 1977 Frank had no financial need to do movie posters, and certainly no aesthetic need, so it came as a welcome surprise to many fans when advertising for *The Gauntlet* appeared via Frazetta's dramatic rendition of Clint Eastwood, Sondra Locke and a bullet-ridden bus. Back home in Carmel, California, Eastwood had seen the articles on Frank in *Esquire* and *Newsweek*. Clint called Frank to express his admiration for Frazetta's art. Eastwood also called to voice his hopes that Frank would be available to do the poster art for the next Eastwood film. Frank's wife and business manager, Ellie, answered the phone. She didn't believe the man on the other end was Clint Eastwood, but went out to the yard and called Frank anyway. Frank was busy working and didn't feel like answering. Frank told Ellie that "If it really *is* Clint Eastwood, he'll call back!" He did call back, putting the Frazetta household of clint Eastwood fans into an uproar. After the filming of *The Gauntlet,* Clint called again about doing the art, and Frank agreed. Eastwood and Locke then flew out to the Frazetta's to pose for the painting. For *What's New, Pussycat?"* Frazetta got a fairly standard $5000. For *The Gauntlet* Frank asked for and got a phenomenal $20,000. And, to top that, sharp Ellie hit Eastwood up for an additional $5000 for the original.

For 1978's *Paradise Alley,* Sylvester Stallone also contacted Frazetta. Frank didn't want to do the job, so to discourage Stallone, he doubled his price. "I figured if I doubled my price I'd be safe," Frazetta revealed. "They'd have to be crazy to pay that much. But, hell, Stallone called his people who called their people and before I knew it Stallone called back and said 'yes!'". So, Frank did six rough sketches for approval. As an afterthought Frank knocked off a seventh, one he didn't like, but knew they'd never pick. "I did the extra rough to make it look like I'd been working," recalled Frazetta. "Of course, it never fails—that was the one they went crazy over." The maverick rough was completed as a finished design. To this date, however, it hasn't been used to promote the film.

RELATED ITEMS

King of the Congo, a 1952 Columbia serial, technically qualifies as the first movie poster with Frazetta art. The cover to Frank's comic book *Thun'da,* published that same year, is reproduced in the lower righthand corner of the poster. *King of the Congo* was "Based on the Adventures of the Dynamic Hero of THUNDA cartoon magazine," according to the poster. Unknown to Frank, Magazine Enterprises (publishers of *Thun'da*) sold the rights to Columbia. Frank was never paid a cent for the character he created—which is why there never was a second *Thun'da* or any other work for M.E. by Frazetta.

Also technically qualifying as movie art is Frazetta's comic book cover for film cowboy *Tim Holt,* issue number 23, and Frank's famous *Buster Crabbe* comic, numbers 4 and 5.

On January 8th, 1956, Marilyn Monroe visited Dogpatch in the *Li'l Abner* Sunday strip. As Capp's off-again-on-again assistant in the '50s, this particular installment reportedly is the only one ever completely pencilled and inked by Frank.

In 1966 Frazetta painted the portrait of *The Group* that appears throughout the film, most prominently in the beginning and under the credits. Unfortunately the original painting was heavily retouched by a studio hack.

In 1967 Frank did two watercolored pencil drawings for the animated puppet feature written by Harvey Kurtzman and Len Korobkin, *Mad Monster Party.* The sketch not shown with this article was described by Frazetta as "A Munsters-style crazy car with funny monsters all around it." After Frazetta had completed the sketches he was informed his art wouldn't be used after all. Frank forgot about it until he saw his sketches boldly displayed on 1-sheets at his local theater. Frank billed the producers and received the extra money owed him. Sketch or finish, Frazetta's *Mad Monster Party* drawings have tremendous charm.

That same year Jack Davis did the 1-sheet for *Waterhole #3.* This art became the cover for the sound track LP, but with an added bonus: a large Frazetta portrait of Roger Miller.

In 1969 an agency hired Frank to do drawings on speculation for the *Paint Your Wagon* poster. The line and watercolor piece consisted of large portraits of Clint Eastwood, Lee Marvin and Jean Seberg surrounded by loads of funny little western figures, goofy gold miners, treasure maps, and so on. But, after a while, Frank's heart wasn't in the work. "I got tired of doing all those tiny vignettes and didn't go any further," explained Frazetta.

For the 1972 documentary feature *The African Elephant* Frazetta painted a 1-sheet that was never used. A three-quarter view of a massive bull elephant peered over a bush, a large full moon looming behind the mighty tusker.

Orsatti Productions commissioned Frazetta to do character designs for a feature length animated *Dracula* in 1975. The production was postponed, however, though

"THE NIGHT THEY RAIDED MINSKY'S"
IN 1925
THERE WAS THIS REAL RELIGIOUS GIRL,
AND BY ACCIDENT–SHE INVENTED THE STRIPTEASE.
THIS REAL RELIGIOUS GIRL
POLICE
★ IF ★ YOU CAN'T STAND THE TERRIFIC GIRLS (10 COUNT 'EM 10) THERE'S ALWAYS THE COMICS ★
"THE NIGHT THEY RAIDED MINSKY'S"
JASON ROBARDS · BRITT EKLAND · NORMAN WISDOM
BERT LAHR
COLOR by Deluxe
United Artists
M
Suggested For MATURE Audiences
PARENTAL DISCRETION ADVISED
THEATRE

Frazetta's original version of *The Night They Raided Minsky's*

recently rumors have circulated that the project may soon be underway again.

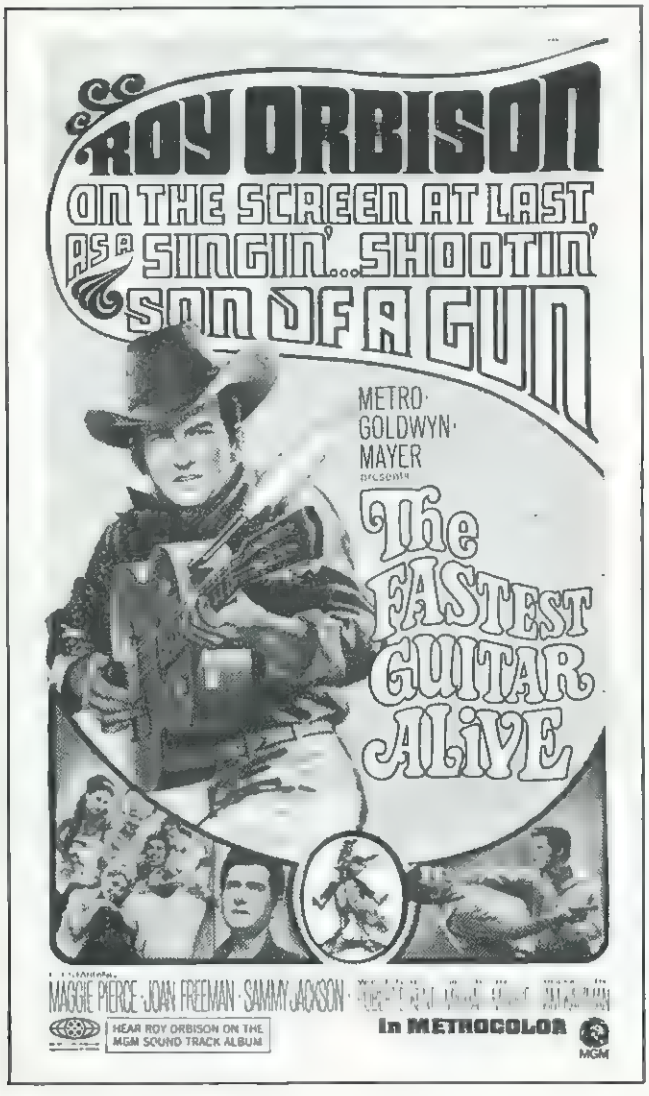
Another Frazetta version of Dracula wraps itself around a combination of Bram Stoker's original novel and Mary Shelley's classic, *Frankenstein.* Frazetta's very Karloffian Frankenstein monster appears on the back of the dust-jacket published for Doubleday's Science Fiction Book Club.

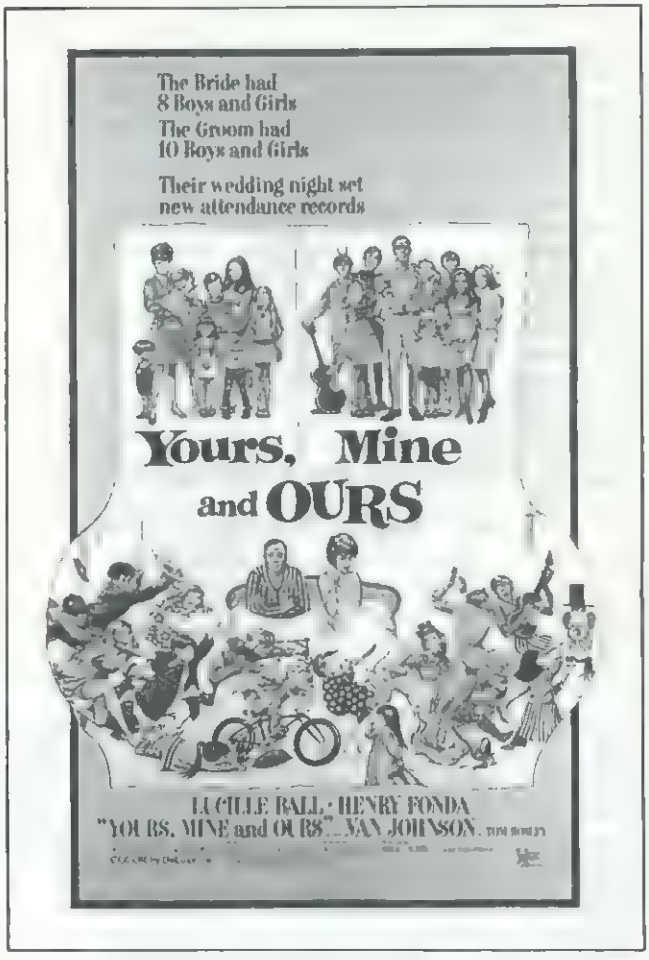
The New York Times and Chicago Tribune ran an ink and wash advertisement drawn by Frank for the TV movie *Give Us Barabbas,* a fine example of Frazetta's masterful linework.

When Dino De Laurentiis was making *King Kong* he flew Frazetta to Hollywood as an impressive gesture to convince Frank to do the poster art. But whenever Frank made suggestions about the feeling the art should project, De Laurentiis would suddenly turn a deaf ear. Finally, Frank pressed for a free hand, which was refused. Despite De Laurentiis' begging and financial temptations, Frank held out against doing art for the film. So it must have come as quite a surprise to Dino when Ace Books reprinted the novelization of the 1933 film with a brand new Frazetta cover in 1976. But the ultimate irony must have been the Frazetta painting for the novelization of the script to De Laurentiis' *King Kong* published by Ace in 1977. The first *Kong* painting was a repainting of the cover to *Creepy* #11. For some reason, Kong has no rib cage, giving him the appearance of a gigantic plush doll. The second painting is an example of why Frazetta commands worldwide fame and recognition. Criticism of this magnificent piece amounts to trivial aesthetic quibbling, but again, a larger rib cage would have made the bulk of the head and arms more believable as well as adding substantial awe to the scale of Kong as related to the girl.

In 1977 De Laurentiis finally coaxed Frazetta into painting poster art for *Orca.* Though *Orca* pleased Frank very much, De Laurentiis rejected the design. Frank let Dino know what he could do with his poster.

In 1978 George Lucas approached Frazetta to paint the dustjacket for the lavish *Star Wars* book. Lucas claimed that Frank's early 1950s *Famous Funnies* Buck Rogers covers had been a major influence on the look and feeling of *Star Wars.* Frank turned down the book cover, pre-



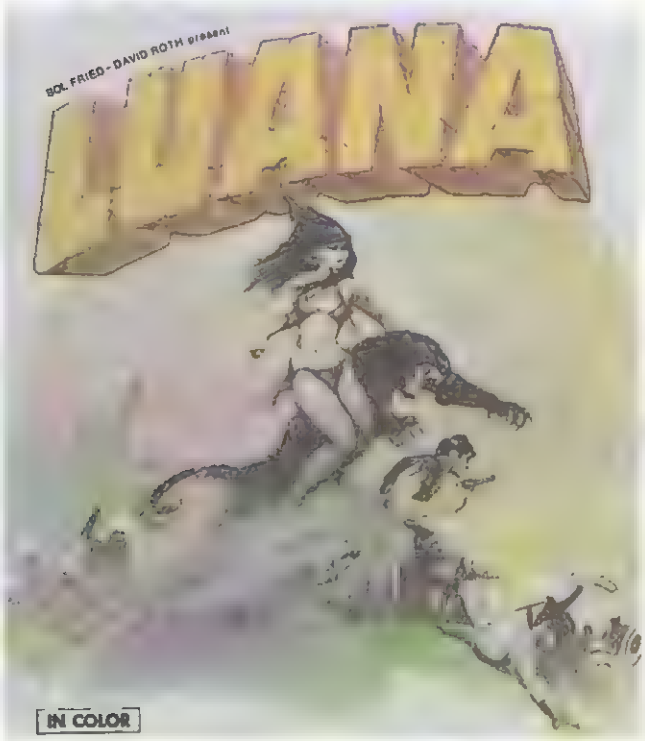


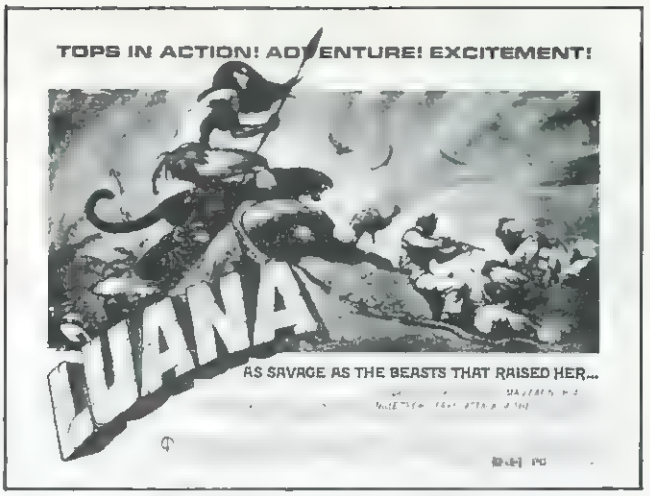
ferring instead to paint scenes and characters of his own creation.

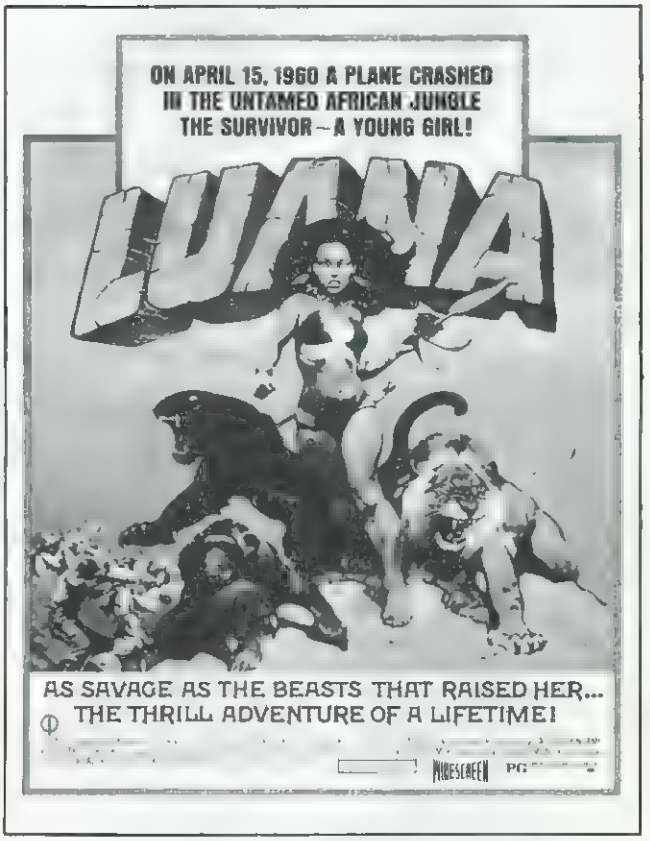
To launch the new TV series *Battlestar Galactica,* and to promote the film release in Europe, Frazetta was commissioned to do three paintings. A new painting was revealed each week for the first three weeks in TV schedules everywhere, including *TV Guide*. The execs who hired Frazetta wisely gave him freedom of interpretation in his execution of the *Galactica* illustrations. Although the *Galactica* ships are a direct antithesis to Frazetta's organic Buck Rogers style space ship, they're handled with facility and are consistent with Frank's own style. The two-guys-and-girl scene is similar in feeling to Frazetta's paperback cover for Brett Sterling's *Danger Planet*. The five-girls art is notable for its monochromatic color scheme and the tremendous feeling for volume achieved in execution of the space ships. The item most Frazetta fans seem to savor most, however, is Frank's lovingly rendered nipple seen through the helmetless girl's spray-on suit. Frazetta poured heavy doses of that something special into his third *Galactica* painting. With many elements of a Conan scene, this picture stands out as a good representative example of his recent work. A large poster-size reproduction on quality paper of the first *Galactica* painting (under the title of *Space #103)* is available from Frazetta Prints, RD 2 Box 357, East Stroudsburg, PA 18301 for $4.00 plus $1.00 handling.

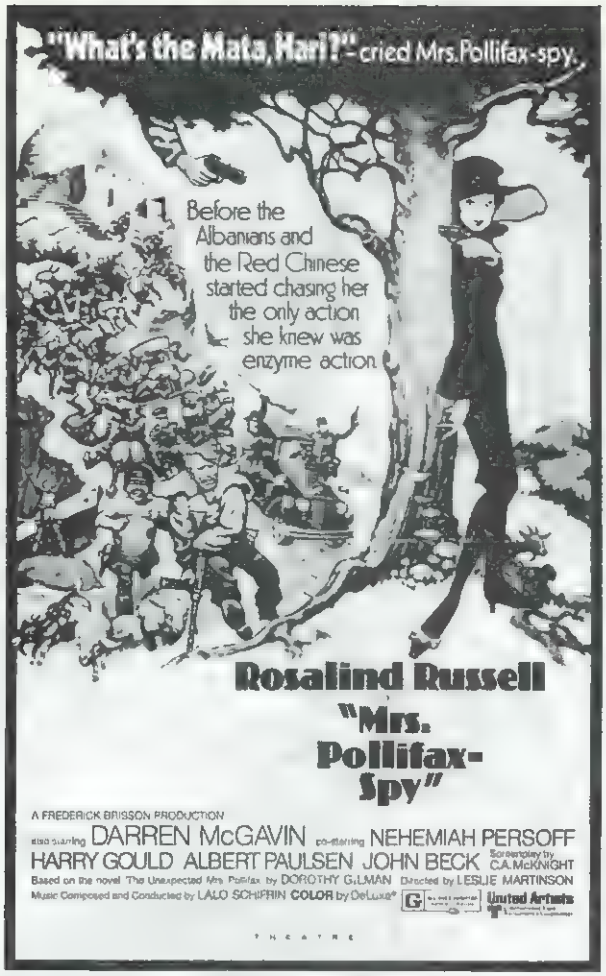
Despite his surprisingly prolific *Galactica* output, it's doubtful that Frazetta will produce much more film work. Frank has already turned down many fantastic offers including a lucrative proposition by a European filmmaker who wanted Frazetta to sit behind his cameras and compose scenes as though they were Frazetta paintings. Frank feels that film and its tangent businesses are not his field, and that even doing 1-sheet poster art takes away from the time he could spend painting visions that are "pure Frazetta."

The movie art of Frank Frazetta provides students and fans of his work a chance to enjoy a rich variety of styles and content from one artist. Though it's unfortunate that after thirteen years Frank's association with films may be at an end, his new efforts to create grand masterpieces that are "pure Frazetta" might ultimately provide an impressive body of work that will serve to further obscure this small but important facet in the career of Frank Frazetta.

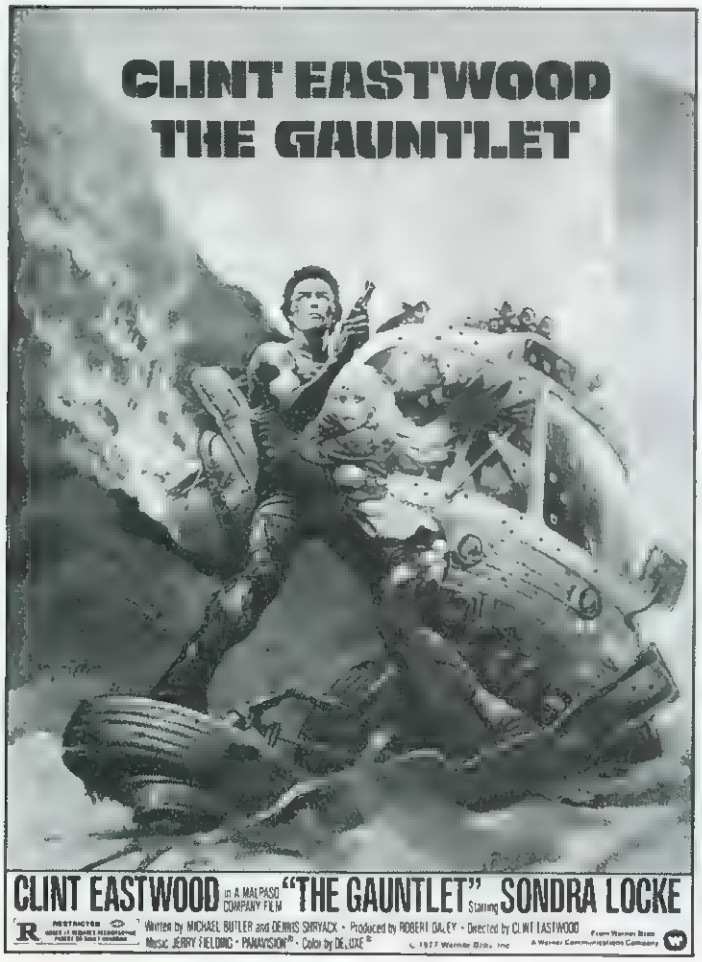




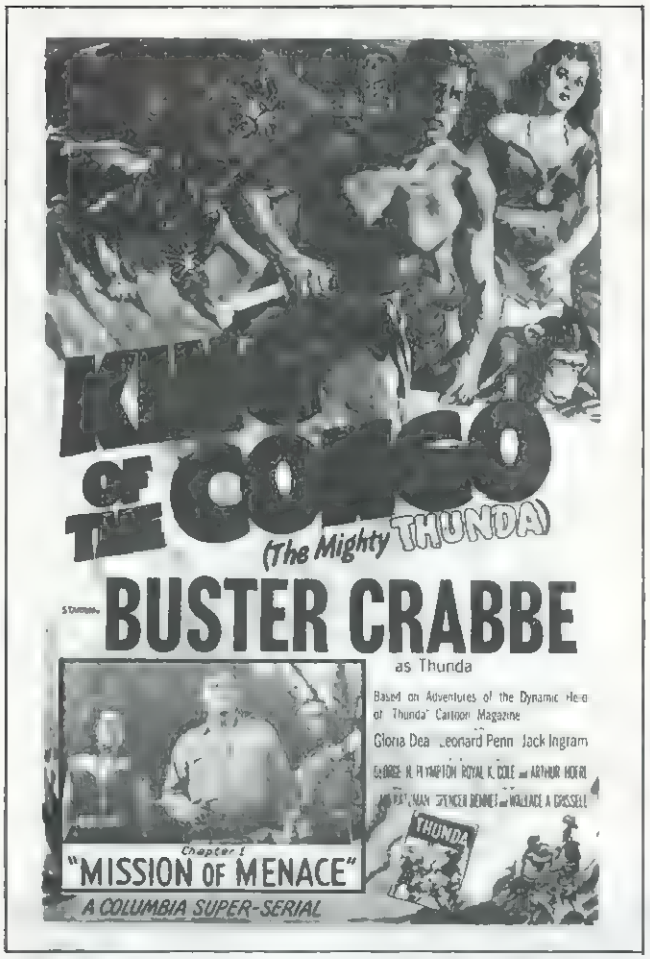

ON APRIL 15, 1960 A PLANE CRASHED
IN THE UNTAMED AFRICAN JUNGLE
THE SURVIVOR – A YOUNG GIRL!
LUANA
AS SAVAGE AS THE BEASTS THAT RAISED HER...
THE THRILL ADVENTURE OF A LIFETIME!
WIDESCREEN
PG


"What's the Mata, Hari?" cried Mrs. Pollifax-spy.
Before the Albanians and the Red Chinese started chasing her the only action she knew was enzyme action
Rosalind Russell
"Mrs. Pollifax-Spy"
A FREDERICK BRISSON PRODUCTION
also starring DARREN McGAVIN co-starring NEHEMIAH PERSOFF
HARRY GOULD ALBERT PAULSEN JOHN BECK
Screenplay by C.A. McKNIGHT
Based on the novel "The Unexpected Mrs. Pollifax" by DOROTHY GILMAN Directed by LESLIE MARTINSON
Music Composed and Conducted by LALO SCHIFRIN COLOR by DeLuxe®
G
United Artists

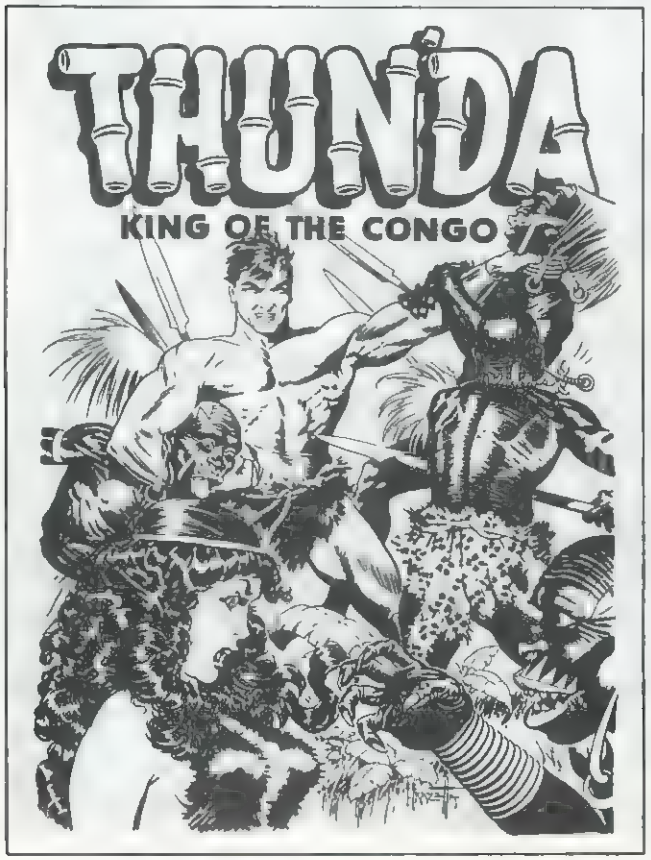
Here is a typical happy family....
When three new kids arrive....
"mixed company"
The family is really together... but the house comes apart!
BARBARA HARRIS · JOSEPH BOLOGNA
"MIXED COMPANY"
United Artists


CLINT EASTWOOD
THE GAUNTLET
CLINT EASTWOOD in A MALPASO COMPANY FILM "THE GAUNTLET" Starring SONDRA LOCKE
R
Written by MICHAEL BUTLER and DENNIS SHRYACK · Produced by ROBERT DALEY · Directed by CLINT EASTWOOD
Music: JERRY FIELDING · PANAVISION® · Color by DE LUXE®
From Warner Bros. A Warner Communications Company

Battlestar Galactica


KING OF THE CONGO
(The Mighty THUNDA)
BUSTER CRABBE
as Thunda
Based on Adventures of the Dynamic Hero of Thunda Cartoon Magazine
Gloria Dea Leonard Penn Jack Ingram
Chapter 1
"MISSION OF MENACE"
A COLUMBIA SUPER-SERIAL

Give Us Barabbas



GROUCHO AND US

"Groucho is going to die tonight," the voice on the phone told me. This was no terrorist calling; it was a friend of a friend of a friend of a friend of the Marx family with inside info on the comedian's condition. He thought I'd want to know and, as it turned out, he was right on both counts — about Groucho dying and about my interest. The two of us shared a fascination and interest in the man born Julius, but known ubiquitously as Groucho Marx. And this was no fanatic, faddist cult we were part of, not a chance. We were — and are — but two of the countless who have seen and relished Marx Brothers movies and come away able to parrot verbatim chunks of Groucho patter.

We were all saddened by the sudden cessation of Groucho, though perhaps not with its timing. Those of us who saw Groucho in his later years were often horrified by his deterioration, particularly sorrowful in a man famed for his rapier wit. Always so quick, always so clever, the words came slowly and painfully for Groucho and they were usually words uttered before and with better timing.

(Is there no spectacle more woebegone than a man within spitting distance of being declared Past Tensed? Stan Laurel, in his declining years wisely eschewed public appearnce in the face of exorbitant offers. He wanted the last remembrance of Stan Laurel to be of the vague little man juxtaposed with Oliver Norvell Hardy, not of an old man who couldn't recognize the time to take that penultimate bow.)

Earlier that week, Elvis Presley had died unexpectedly. All three TV networks quickly cobbled up **Man And The Legend** specials to air the same night. If you tuned in any (and they were all identical) you heard people who were fourteen when "Heartbreak Hotel" hit, or perhaps sixteen for "Return to Sender," and they told about how Elvis changed their lives. Okay, so maybe he did. Then Groucho died and we ("we" being the aforesaid Marx fans) waited for the specials. Surely, considering the number of times he had recently been shuttled to and from hospitals, there were specials all ready to go: Reels of career retrospective to be aired along with celebrity reactions and details of the passing. So we waited.

Nothing.

The Tonight Show started right on time — no half-hour delay, despite the fact

BY MARK EVANIER

that a postponement of John Davidson scarcely needs much of a reason. A week or two later, ABC — with no advance ballyhoo — trotted out a quickie with Dick Cavett hosting old videotapes and words of remembrance. It was something, but hardly the kind of tribute warranted. Not that this article is one, either, but the passing of Groucho has rekindled certain memories and I'd like to share them with you.

SOMETIME IN 1970:

Let's change her name to Pauline because I've never known a girl named Pauline. She was very, very pretty in the way that could set your gonads registering Ten on the Richter Scale. And I wanted to go out with her. She had sat next to me in my Psysiology class back in high school. And now here she was in college, not remembering me but likely to if only I had the chutzpah to approach her on campus. I had opportunities by the fleet rate. Every day I saw her walking around, usually alone. It would be of little danger to just stroll up to her, ever so nonchalantly, and strike up some wondrous reminiscence over our mutual frog-dissection. But still . . .

Has there never been the man with enough fortitude to risk failure even when he knows it won't hurt too badly? I mean, what was I risking by striking up a conversation with the lady in question? A smidgen of my ego, already stockpiled in quantity? Always there's that mental leash that, as soon as you say **I'll do it,** says **No, you won't.** Each time I've ignored that leash and pressed onward, it has turned out to the good for me. But it's there and sometimes we all let it restrain us. That's why we love watching Groucho: There's nothing he won't do. He'll accost any woman with the most salacious of overtures and the ones not worth accosting, he'll insult. In **A Night at the Opera,** when a pompous official is about to read what promises to be a pompous — and long — speech, Groucho merely steps up and makes confetti of it and that ends that. Wouldn't we all like the nerve to be so brazen?

Finally, I decided to lay my tremulous self-esteem on the line and approach the fair Pauline. One day, when I saw her walk into the campus cafeteria, I advanced. Circling around to another door and the lunch counter therein, I bought a large orange juice to use as a prop. With flawless timing, I emerged into the cafeteria seating area just as Pauline was coming out of the cafeteria line with a tray of jello and fruit-at-the-bottom yogurt. **Well, fancy meeting you here!**

She seemed to have no objections to my sharing her table so I sat down and launched into my wittiest repartee. She laughed at the jokes. She even laughed at the straight lines. This was not one of your brightest ladies. She had the approximate I.Q. of a Puka Shell necklace, as it turned out. Today I know better and shun such women as if they have bubonic plague. Back then, I was not so discerning. At least, the girl had taste. One of the things she laughed loudest over was when I mentioned the Alps and then said, "And the lord Alps those that Alp themselves." Then, giving credit where due, I added, "That's from **Horse Feathers** with the Marx Brothers, of course."

"I've never seen that film," Pauline replied.

"Well," I said, "it may not be as good as **A Night at the Opera** but it's certainly a good film."

"I've never seen that one, either."

"How about **Duck Soup?**" I asked.

"Never saw that one."

"**Day at the Races?**"

Nope.

"**Monkey Business?**" I acted horrified. "Surely, you've at least seen **Monkey Business!**"

"I've never seen any Marx Brothers movie," she said.

I did about four minutes on how she was missing out on one of life's great experiences (I think I even added "besides me, of course." I was really laying on the Bandini that day). I finally got around to remarking, "Say, I think the Encore Theatre is showing a couple of good Marx Brothers films this week. Yes, come to think of it, they're showing **Go West** and **A Day at the Races.**" I was still maintaining this conversation on a purely platonic plateau which, in addition to being tough to enunciate is also safer when you're not certain if she's married/engaged/dating a gorilla/whatever. I said, "Tell your boyfriend to take you to see them."

I wish I could give this whole story a happy ending, especially in light of how morose this article will be getting. Pauline and I were an item for a few months but we didn't get married and have four kids named Groucho, Harpo, Chico and Zeppo. It would make a nice ending but it just didn't happen. Sorry.

DECEMBER 11, 1972:

The Dorothy Chandler Pavillion is part of the Music Center complex in downtown Los Angeles and that's where Groucho performed his one-man show (one man plus Erin Fleming, it turned out). The gala event was scheduled for months earlier but Groucho took ill and the whole soiree was delayed. In the interim, we Marx fans waited — anxious at the notion of perhaps our only chance to ever see him in person. We consoled ourselves by listening to the A&M recording of Groucho's show in New York. On the record, Groucho sounds pretty good; coherent, though a bit hoarse.

Then came the night of the eleventh. I went to the theatre with my friend Robert Solomon, a soul of similar Grouchomania. I did not take my then-current girl friend Carol whom I roped with much the same ploy used on Pauline. Carol was not pleased by my going with Robert.

The evening was a success and then it wasn't. Groucho received a seemingly endless cascade of ovations, usually standing. But the audience, outwardly applauding, was inwardly cringing. Groucho was very old and his show consisted of him standing at a podium (why he wasn't sitting, I don't know, but his promoters sprang for exactly no scenery or props). He stood there and read card after card of anecdotes, sometimes breez-

ing from one to the next with no notice that a laugh was supposed to come between stories. At one point he read a card introducing a film clip, then continued right on into a story about something else. His secretary/manager Erin Fleming hustled out from the wings to force him into a chair, saying, "We're going to show **A Night at the Opera**."

Groucho muttered "But I've already seen it," triggering an immense laugh at the one and only ad-lib of the evening.

Later, Groucho suddenly stopped in mid-story to request that his piano player (a then-unknown Marvin Hamlisch) do his Johnny Mathis impression. Hamlish was startled but, realizing it was Groucho's way of asking for a break, he launched into the imitation. When Groucho tried to perform "Lydia, the Tattooed Lady," Hamlish had to prompt him on many of the lines.

During the show, movie cameras positioned throughout the star-packed audience filmed Groucho's attempts and the audience's warm reverberations. The film was supposed to wind up as a special for television, we heard. But it never did and it's not hard to guess the reason.

A SUNDAY AFTERNOON IN 1974:

I was lolling at the brunch table at Hillcrest country Club. I was at Hillcrest because some family friends are longtime members of the posh Jewish club. I was lolling at the brunch table because they ran out of breakfast steaks to go with my pancakes and sausage (the place isn't **that** Jewish) and someone was supposed to be hauling another tray out. In the next room, I could see Georgie Jessel in a God-awful checkered suit with about eight dozen medals pinned on the breast pocket.

So while I'm lolling there, the man standing next to me says "Try the whitefish." I look over towards him.

It's Groucho Marx.

Here's what I was talking about with that mental leash. All the time around Hollywood, I spot celebrities. I can spot an old character actor at a hundred paces. Very rarely do I ever approach any of them. I'm about to, then that leash tugs and says **What are you going to say to him /her? You'll just make a fool of yourself.** And since I'm not all that aflutter to meet the person, I usually don't. I did it with Harold Lloyd and with Billy Gilbert and I'm glad on both counts. But there are others, some now deceased, that I'm sorry I didn't at least say hello to; especially old-timers out of the major spotlight who, like Gilbert was, would have been delighted that someone in my age bracket knew their work. If I had seen Groucho across the room, I probably wouldn't have trotted over and said howdy. He was once rude to some friends of mine who did that. Erin Fleming, acting as go-between, said "Groucho, these boys would like to meet you," to which Groucho responded, "Well, they've met me," and kept on walking. I wouldn't have wanted that to happen so I was glad to be forced into a spot where I **had** to talk to the man, even if I was stunned for just one moment.

"I said, try the whitefish," he repeated.

"I thought the password was Swordfish," I answered.

"Are you one of those kids who's seen every one of my movies a hundred times?"

Acting a bit embarrassed, I said, "A thousand times."

"Which one is your favorite?"

"Either **A Night at the Opera** or **Horse Feathers**," I responded. "Depends on which one I saw last."

"Which one did you see last?"

"**A Night in Casablanca**," I tell him.

"Oh, that was a piece of shit," Groucho Marx said.

We talked for maybe ten minutes about nothing particularly worth preserving for posterity. He mentioned the name of George S. Kaufman and grumbled about how kids like me had no idea who Kaufman was. I said I certainly did know who Kaufman was, and I recited enough stage play titles to prove I wasn't bluffing. He was pleased at that; moreso that I also knew who Franklin P. Adams was and that I'd been moved to research men like them (and Alexander Woolcott and Marc Connelly, **et al**) by mentions of them in books by and about the Marx Brothers. The only other thing I might add is that Groucho tried to make a joke about how I should get some brothers and form an act called Mark's Brothers. He tried to make the joke and it was in there, someplace, but he couldn't quite put it together right. Oh — and I also told about how I wooed Pauline and other ladies by whisking them to Marx Brothers films. Groucho was quite interested in that. "Imagine kids getting laid because of our movies. I **couldn't** get laid because of them."

I headed off, when it was time to part, thinking to myself that I could not boast of having met and talked with Groucho Marx — perhaps the only person alive I really wanted to meet. It was at that point, I believe, that I lost forever what little "star-fever" I might ever have had. After you meet Groucho Marx, who is there to get excited about?

OCTOBER 26, 1976:

It was my second day as Story Editor of a TV show called "Welcome Back, Kotter" and it had already been an amazing thirty-six hours. I met hundreds of people — many of whom, I was startled to find, were toadying up to me as a person of power on the show. Toadying mostly were the "Under-Five" players — actors and actresses signed for that week only to do four lines or less. Almost every one sought me out to compliment me on that week's script, into which I'd had little input, and to point out some teensy plot flaw that could only be rectified by enlarging their role. While I was scurrying about trying to learn who everyone is and where everything is and mostly how everything works, I was getting quite an education. At one point in the afternoon, I got stuck in the elevator with Olivia Newton-John and Elliott Gould. Ho hum.

In the midst of all this hyper-activity, one of the secretaries mentioned offhandedly that Groucho Marx might be coming to that evening's taping.

It seems from all I could gather, that

the back-story on this visit goes something like this: The star of the show, Gabe Kaplan, was frequently doing Groucho impressions. this is nothing new. Everyone does Groucho impressions, usually bad ones. It says something about Groucho's masterful timing that folks will recognize an imitation that sounds nothing like his pitch so long as it approximates his rhythm and includes a pantomime cigar. Groucho saw Gabe do his impression and announced he was going to sue. This, also, is nothing new. Groucho threatened to sue everyone. He once threatened to sue his son Arthur over an altogether flattering, though unauthorized biography. At least a few of Groucho's most fervent, young fans were crushed when they approached him with proposed fan-type projects only to be rudely rebuffed and threatened with legal action, albeit unfounded.

Somehow, peace was made between Groucho and Gabe. Groucho was invited to pick a Tuesday, any Tuesday we're taping, to drop by and do a cameo walk-on appearance at the close of the show. As fate would have it, he picked my first Tuesday there.

We quickly wrote a joke for Groucho to do. Here it was; my second day as a staff writer on a TV show and I'm writing a joke for Groucho Marx to tell. Something, I was thinking, is wrong with this.

A call came in around three to confirm that Groucho would be there, that he would do the cameo walk-on, but that he wouldn't speak. Groucho, we were told, had recently decided never to speak in public again, thinking he was too old. We switched around the closing joke so that Gabe did the joke, then two people in the crowd of extras would part to reveal Groucho standing there. His sudden appearnce, wordless thought it may be, would be the topper to Gabe's joke. All Groucho had to do was to stand in place. Wouldn't you know it? One of the Under-Five folks sidled up to me as word of the plan got around. He suggested that his character, who otherwise had eight words in the script, might be given Groucho's closing joke. this was just before dress rehearsal. After dress, I had the fun taks of cutting this schmuck's part completely out of the show. Advice to beginning actors: Don't ask for the Grand Finale on your first job.

Just before taping: The appearance of Groucho had been rumored as on-again, off-again, all evening. The set was abuzz, though, with celebrities. Lee Grant was there since her daughter, Dinah Manoff, was in the show that evening. Valeria Harper's daughter was, also. At about 8:15, a call came up to the writers' dressing room that Groucho was downstairs (the writers got a dressing room so they could be close in case of emergency rewrites; Executive Producer James Komack had a dressing room just off the stage but he vacated his for the evening and Groucho's name was put on the door). The writers all traipsed down to see Groucho.

The studio audience was sitting in bleachers, being warmed-up by comedian Mike Preminger. Mike was unnerved by all the hubbub in the wings and by conflicting signals he was getting as to how much time he had to fill before we'd be ready to roll tape.

Groucho was not feeling well and it was decided that he would not do the walk-on but would have his photo taken with the cast on the set. The shortest route from Groucho's dressing room was directly across the front of the bleachers, past where Mike Preminger was filling time, and through the center flap of the goldenrod curtain between the audience and the Kotter classroom set. With several people guiding him, Groucho was led out in front of the studio audience while cast and crew hustled around the other way to meet him behind the curtain.

Out front, the audience did not recognize Groucho Marx.

The man was so old and so feeble that they did not recognize him. He wore a black beret and a heavy salt-and-pepper suit with a thick sweater underneath. He seemed to have shrunk since the last time I saw him. His mustache was snow-white and the veins in his neck protruded horribly.

Mike Preminger (who apparently was not briefed) blurted out a quick introduction and the audience, responding to the name, burst into loud cheering and applause. Thunderous is the word that comes to mind. Groucho, making his way through the curtain flap, didn't hear them.

Behind the curtain, cast members and crew members alike were introducing themselves to Groucho. He shook everyone's hand and mumbled, "Nice to meet you." oblivious as to who he was actually meeting. He didn't seem to know where he was and he certainly didn't know which of the people gently pumping his hand were actors and which ones moved scene flats for a living. He was steered to Mr. Kotter's chair in the classroom and gently eased into it as Gabe and the Sweathogs (John Travolta, Ron Palillo, Larry Hilton-Jacobs and Robert Hegyes) crowded around. A photographer clicked off a dozen or so photographs. (Recalling Dick Cavett's warning to the Carnegie Hall audience in the introduction of Groucho on the A&M record, I had warn-

ed the photog that Groucho was made dizzy by flash bulbs. He replied that there was plenty of light on the set without strobe and, besides, the way Groucho looked, these pictures would probably never be released. Insofar as I can tell, they never were. When I phoned up the appropriate P.R. folks to procure a copy of the photo, I was told that no such photos existed; that, in fact, Groucho Marx had never visited the set of "Welcome Back, Kotter.")

As they went through the motions of taking the pictures, Groucho remained unmoving, unsmiling and about as unlike that fellow in **Duck Soup** as it would be possible to imagine. I found myself mentally repeating, "This is Groucho Marx," trying to get that notion to sink in. The Groucho I met at Hillcrest was the one I knew — older, mayhaps, and slower, but nonetheless recognizable. This Goucho, being led about by Erin Fleming, is not.

The pictures done, Groucho was directed off the stage. Several people had already left, repulsed by the spectacle of this ancient person. "I don't want to see him like that," I heard a few of them say, exiting as quickly as they had eagerly arrived. Bobby Hegyes was walking around saying, "How an I go on after seeing that?" Bobby was in no mood for comedy.

I got the idea to liberate the GROUCHO MARX sign from the dressing room door, an interesting momento. But, when I got there, someone else of like mind had beaten me to it. I arrived just in time to see Groucho and his entourage step slowly out the door to a waiting limousine. In the months I worked on "Kotter," I never heard anyone mention Groucho's visit again. In a sense, that P.R. man was correct. Groucho Marx had never really been there.

You couldn't have found a person on the "Kotter" crew who would bet you a dime that the man who posed for photos with the cast would live another ten weeks, much less ten months. But he did. I saw him one other time and he was even worse, wholly unable to talk. It was very sad.

ABOUT EIGHT MINUTES AGO:

I was on the verge of writing the denouement of all this when a lady friend of mine stormed into my office with all the pages of this manuscript except the one I am typing on. At first, I thought she had just caught onto the Marx Brothers movie pick-up-women trick (which is how I met her, too) but no. She said, "This is an awfully downer article, Mark. Groucho brought a lot of folks a lot of joy, you know."

She's right, of course. She always is. I've omitted until now one very important point about Groucho and that is that Groucho was, above all else, funny. And without funny, none of those other things (his chutzpah, his being a symbol of rebellion, etc.) would have had much significance. I have seen audiences dissolved into helpless laughter by his films — adults and children alike convulsed by almost spastic convulsions of laughter, trying to stop laughing so as not to miss further gems emanating from the screen. And it's not just the biggies that do this, it's every Marx Brothers movie. Despite Groucho's opinion of **A Night in Casablanca**, it can reduce an audience into pools of unflavored gelatin, all aquiver with laughter. And reruns of Groucho's "You Bet Your Life" TV show have been resuscitated from wherever all the black-and-white film cans were banished in favor of color **Gilligan's Island** reruns. They are as funny as they ever were, which is considerable. So what, you say?

Look: The most important thing Groucho Marx — a man who starred in vaudeville, Broadway shows, movies, radio and TV, and who even had a short literary career — did with his life was to make people laugh. And though Groucho the man is dead, his films live on. And he will continue to do the most important thing he did with his lfe. That, friends, is as close to immortality as you're going to find. "Funny" is the secret word.

ROOTS

COUNTRY STYLE

BY FRED WALKER

Question: What in its youth was ridiculed, apologized for, and generally considered an embarrassing form of American culture became, after a period of maturity, the hottest thing in town?

Answer: Country Music.

During the forties and fifties what kept radio station WWVA's (Wheeling, West Virginia) old coffee-drinking buddy Lee Moore up all night selling rosebushes, patent medicines and amazing kitchen aids is no longer a genre confined to the Appalachian hogback, the deep South, or even the vast reaches of rural America.

Through a process of evolution, ripoffs and fusions, Country has become a cultural strain so virulent that it threatens to become the national style. "Threatens" is an interesting word if you recall the use of it with regard to Rock in the fifties.

Country is undoubtedly the most formidable and lucrative force in music since Rock. Some folks think, now that Rock appears to be burning itself out on a pyre of Glitter, Disco and Punk, that Country will rise like a phoenix above the ashes. A bit too much to believe or hope for, depending on one's preference. Whatever, as Rock evolves and moves on, Country moves in to take down the Vacancy sign.

Not that Merle Haggard or Tammy Wynette will overtake and replace the Rolling Stones or Elton John. Merle's and Tammy's beer-joint-jukebox formula is only one of the many forms currently and loosely lumped under the category Country. A process of hybridization peculiar to the history of Country has recently accelerated and new offshoots are appearing almost daily.

In the fifties, Lee Moore, DJ of the Eastern Seaboard's 50,000 watt clear-channel WWVA could be heard from Nova Scotia to the Florida Keys (weather permitting), serving a minority who loved the traditional strain of Hillbilly, Ridgerunner, Down-Home Country music. Isolated geographically, and segregated from the mainstream of Pop, it was a uniquely regional American form. Lee Moore had his work cut out for him. All he had to do was pitch for his sponsors between cuts (three parts pitch, one part music), give out some farm and trucking information, and air tunes by Hank Williams, Ernest Tubb, Mac Wiseman, Lefty Frizzell and many others. Life was simple before Nashville became Cashville.

It was Elvis Presley, Carl Perkins and Johnny Cash who initially shattered the Pop/Country division with hits that blazed into both charts and began a revolution that may never end. Simultaneously Rock & Roll was advancing from another direction. Where Country and R&R overlapped, new variations proliferated. Money sniffers in the business caught the scent of long green coming from the direction of Nashville and the rest is history. What soon evolved in R&R and Rockabilly became so commercialized and watered down that it almost killed itself outright.

True Country buffs could smell commercialization a mile away. So when lots of kids I knew were turning to Rock, some — like myself — found refuge in Country. Instead of Frankie Avalon and Paul Anka, we munched cheeseburgers and french fries listening to Wheeling. Names like Lester Flatt and Earl Scruggs, Bill Monroe and his Bluegrass Boys produced screwed-up smiles and sidelong glances when you dropped them in the wrong crowd. I often made a point of doing this.

"Scruggs?"

"Did you say Scruggs?"

Or maybe Roy Acuff.

It was lots of fun to go to a party in New York City on 86th Street in the fashionable upper East Side and drop some of those names into the cool world of hipdom. A name like Grandpa Jones would raise a few eyebrows and then sink like a stone.

"Charlie Parker, Miles Davis, man, like . . . where have you been?"

Umm . . . ever hear of Hawkshaw Hawkins?"

"Who?"
"Hank Williams?"
"What did he do, darling?"
"Cold, Cold Heart."
"Oh, of course — Tony Bennett!"

On only one occasion in New York did I run across anybody who, among all the hipsters in that circle in 1956, knew anything about that kind of down-home stuff. Her name was Jay, and she loved Flatt and Scruggs. She said that some day the forms of Country, Pop and Rock would blend into new varieties and that Bluegrass might even become popular on a wide scale. I lent her my Louvin Brothers album, **Tragic Songs of Life**, to record on tape. It featured songs like **In the Pines, Mary of the Wild Moor** and **Alabama**, this last a love song to the beauties of that Dixie state. It was a windy, wintry night and on the way back from her place we harmonized **In the Pines**, above the blustery gale whistling through the canyons of Gotham.

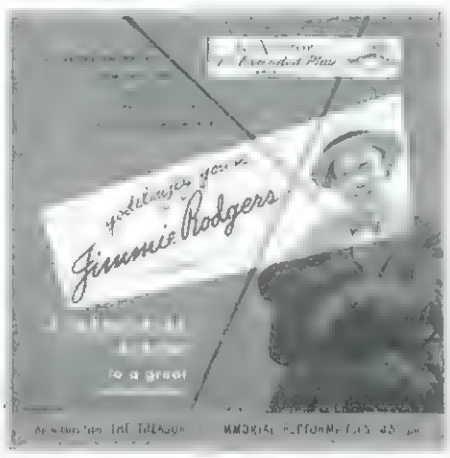
I left New York the next day for the hills of Connecticut, gratified that at least someone in the crowd had heard of Bill Monroe. She even knew who the "Singing Brakeman," Jimmie Rodgers, was.

Jimmie Rodgers popularized the style of white Blues, borrowing from black bluesmen, and writing songs in the twenties and early thirties that made him a legend. Rodgers, considered to be the founder of modern Country, was the mentor of and model for Hank Williams, Ernest Tubb and, yes, the earliest recorded songs of Gene Autry. Mentioning Jimmie Rodgers in the mid-fifties was like dropping a pebble into the Bermuda Triangle from 20,000 feet, even in the wilds of Connecticut. Then, to further complicate matters, in 1956 another Jimmie Rodgers appeared on the Folk-Pop bandwagon with a string of hits that included **Honeycomb** and **Kisses Sweeter Than Wine**, aimed at the burgeoning teen market. Aside from the fact that his name was annoyingly identical to the original, the two bear no resemblance whatever.

The Singing Brakeman of the twenties and thirties had actually worked the train yards, ridden the rails and frequented the hobo camps he referred to in his songs. I loved the songs of the old brakeman. He had recorded most of his stuff with RCA, and in the mid-fifties RCA produced an Extended Play collection (45 rpm, two cuts each side) of just about everything he'd recorded. I bought every one of those EPs, and I'll bet I was their only customer in Middletown, Conn. **T For Texas (Blue Yodel No. 1)** was, and still is, one of my favorite recordings of all time, along with **Mule-Skinner Blues (Blue Yodel No. 8)**. But even my Country-loving friends thought me a bit strange. After all, that was old hat. The recordings, however well revamped by RCA, were pretty tinny sounding. And, admittedly, Rodgers did a lot of songs that now seem cloyingly sentimental. Yet, while he was dying of tuberculosis on a cot at the RCA studios in New York, he cut some of the music that many later stars built their careers on — Hank Williams especially. The Singing Brakeman, frail and plagued with poor health to the end, set wheels in motion that are still rolling through the charts today. Many a modern Rock group might, once in a while, face in the direction of Mississippi on the way to the bank. Mississippi gave us not only Jimmie but the legendary "Leadbelly," Huddie Ledbetter, who, along with Blind Lemon Jefferson, is considered the most influential of the practitioners of black blues.

Johnny Cash

Ralph Stanley



RCA's Extended Play 45

It's nothing new to trace the origins of Rock and some forms of Country back to black blues. One strain of Country that largely falls outside that category is Bluegrass.

Bluegrass was popularized by Bill Monroe. The Appalachian area from West Virginia through Kentucky down into the deep South had been dotted with groups doing this kind of basically English, Irish, Scottish-originated music for some two centuries. The Louvin Brothers' **Mary of the Wild Moor** is of this genre, being an English folk song dating to the 18th century, as is **Knoxville Girl**, dating to Elizabethan times, about a murder which occurred in Knoxville, England. Fiddles, string bass, two or three-part harmony, mandolins, acoustic guitars were the basic ingredients, sometimes adding dobro (a flat-held slide guitar with metal resonator), autoharp, and maybe a five-string banjo.

In 1940 Earl Scruggs joined Bill Monroe and his Bluegrass Boys. Scruggs had developed the style of three-finger picking on the five-string banjo which, aside from being identified with his name ever since, eventually became one of the key elements in that type of music, despite the fact that bluegrass had been around for some time without it. Later in the fifties anything with this instrumentation and style — especially including the five-string banjo — became known as Bluegrass, a type of music you just didn't bother to play for hipster friends in New York or anywhere outside your own circle of buffs. It was so down-home and so uncommercial you had to resign yourself to minority status.

For me, it was like living two lives. Jazz parties in New York with an intellectual, arty clique one weekend, and another, country hoedowns in the hills of Connecticut with a group of closer friends who knew their own art very well when it came to Country music. Most of the young kids my age, as well as other members of the circle who were older, played more than one instrument. Maybe guitar, dobro and steel, or fiddle, mandolin and bass. It was a point of pride to be able to switch off. Unfortunately no one knew the five-string banjo.

I recall one night in particular. As I parked my car by a lake, about thirty yards from the house where a hoedown was just warming up, I could hear, muffled through a dense fog, that warm, intense and inviting sound of a band jamming. The music is going like an eight-wheel driver at full throttle, mandolins, guitars, bass and dobro right in train, and as the fiddler takes his solo you know you're hearing real Country music. They're doing **Orange Blossom Special**, and Lord, is it ever rolling. Inside the house the music becomes overwhelming. A blood-spattered bass is held in the hands of a true afficionado of ridgerunner music, oblivious to his bleeding fingers battered by the strings. He doesn't give a damn. He keeps going, wide-eyed, flying, at a place in time when coke or any other kind of dope wasn't even thought about, much less available. White Lightning was still the biggest thrill, next to the music, but they hadn't got to the booze at this stage of the hoedown. Not the players, anyway. They were high on **Corrine, Corrina**, and then they were speeding through the jungles on **The Wabash Cannonball**. There were two Martin guitars, a Gibson, a mandolin , two fiddles, a dobro and bass. No percussion, piano, or electric stuff. (Later on a "modern" pedal steel was grudgingly added because, everyone had to admit, it sounded good.)

Eventually I got drunk and wanted to solo some old Jimmie Rodgers songs. Eyebrows still went up. "Jimmie Rodgers?"

At this time, the late fifties, Fats Domino was becoming wildly popular. The age of name-gimmick was ushered in with Chubby Checker. For a while I toyed with the idea of cutting a demo under the name of Skinny Parchesi. Fabian was being catapulted to teen-throb fame from Philadelphia's South Side in a blitzkrieg of unparalleled hype. In New York a promoter took another then-unknown and concocted the sure-fire winner of a name for him, Conway Twitty — a singer who could switch-hit from Country to Rock & Roll. It was becoming ever more apparent that there was a cleavage in Pop music: you had your choice between commercial teen songs and music that meant something from the gut up. It all boiled down to Twitty, a name to remember, and Scruggs, a name you couldn't forget. Except Earl was born with his. The difference being one of quality and honesty, home-cooked food versus Pup 'n' Taco. But in the late fifties it seemed more often than not that Pop would turn into a hot dog and snub the filet mignon.

By 1959, traditionalists in Country knew they were bucking the headwinds of change. Elvis was in permanent orbit, and the revolution of R&R had shoved the old Pop fare aside. Patti Page and Joni James seemed to just dry up and blow away. Electronic instrumentation was taking over. The sixties exploded in psychedelic variations of the Rock form that established electrified music as a permanent fixture on the Pop landscape. There was money in those amps — money no Bluegrass picker could hope to make with a dobro or a five-string banjo. And trads, instinctively fearing anything electric, wanted no part of the amps.

In that decade traditional Country/-Bluegrass became more and more a fond memory for me. Bob Dylan, the Beatles, the Rolling Stones and the whole sociopolitical revolution dominated. As for Country, well, that was stuff you heard in places like Lodi, Tarboro, or maybe in a sleazy beer joint on Eighth Avenue in New York. It was bumpety-bump, **bumpety-bump**, Johnny Cash, it was "I don't need no salt in my beer since I started cryin' and drinkin' over you." Country, particularly Bluegrass, seemed a dead-end street.

Then an interesting development occurred. Her name was Joan Baez. In addition to her social protest stuff of the sixties, she began doing some real Country. The next thing I knew, her pal Bob Dylan was also going Country. Of course one could never imagine combining Joan Baez and Bob Dylan with Earl Scruggs. But they did.

Scruggs, Dylan, Baez, the Byrds and members of the Scruggs family did a KCET (PBS) television special entitled "Earl Scruggs, His Family and Friends." It became a movie and Columbia Records released excerpts from it as an album under the same title in 1971. It gave me goose bumps then and it still does now. It meant that a new hybrid, one with real value, had emerged — one that would become a force in Pop music.

The album marked a turning point with political significance. It begins and ends at the massive peace rally Moratorium in Washington DC with an interviewer asking Scruggs questions. At the beginning of the last cut he's asked how he feels about the war. In his characteristic drawl he replies, choosing his words slowly, that he's against it. At which point the band that would later become the nucleus of The Earl Scruggs Review tears into **Foggy Mountain Breakdown** as thousands upon thousands go wild with the kind of appreciation I thought I'd never hear accorded my own very special kind of music. The crowd had not heard the interview. The social implications were revolutionary, astounding and wonderful.

Scruggs embarked on this course into the teeth of that tendency among traditionalists to preserve the original form against influence from electronic or commercial onslaught. Being one of the living Bluegrass legends, Scruggs no doubt engendered a feeling of abandonment among his more conservative fans. I have to wonder how it was received in parts of the deep South. Dylan experienced a similar backlash on a larger scale when he apparently stopped writing protest songs and began a flirtation with the Country form. I know several Bluegrass buffs who still feel betrayed over Scruggs' defection from the still-traditional Lester Flatt band. I felt a twinge of it for a while until I began to see the immense potential of this new hybrid. It had all the qualities of the original and, more than anything else, the promise of bringing this kind of music to

Bob Dylan

Joan Baez

Earl Scruggs Lester Flatt

Bob Wills

broader, younger audiences — something any form of country, let alone Bluegrass, had never known. But I also felt a deep satisfaction born of vindication. New York, I was hipper than thou! It was apparent that Scruggs had moved into international status as the innovator of a unique American institution, the five-string banjo.

About this same time, Merle Haggard arrived on the national charts with **Okie From Muskogee** — "A place where even squares can have a ball . . ." I liked it, too, with a slightly self-conscious smile and a sidelong glance at my friends, who now all had long hair and beards. Someone said it was a big hit with the hippies out in San Francisco. With that tune a polarity was established in the field of Country: Merle Haggard and those of his ilk would go their way, Johnny Cash in a similar direction musically, at least, with Jesus his constant muse. Earl would continue finding new ways to develop and enhance his music. In 1969 Scruggs and Flatt split up, and Earl and his sons formed the Review.

In the past few years there has been an increase in Bluegrass popularity. It's not a matter of "acceptance." Most of the people I know between the ages of 17 and 25 seem to see the inherent value in Bluegrass. I don't think it's too far-fetched to say that the revolution of the sixties, topped off with Watergate, had something to do with it. After that inundation of complexities and dishonesty, somewhere in the heartland of America a certain respect for anything clean, simple and genuine surfaced, embracing an idea whose time had come. This whole new generation come along would as soon hear Scruggs doing **Earl's Breakdown** as the Grateful Dead doing **Truckin'**.

On the other hand Haggard, Waylon Jennings and other AM radio stars seem content to stay with beer-joint-jukebox music that would, were it not for the new hybrids, leave country about where it was twenty years ago. With the exception of a handful of artists, very little imagination has been brought into this brand of Country. Haggard has shown some flexibility and range in his choice of material, such as his Bob Wills tribute in the Western Swing idiom. Recently he cut another tribute, to Jimmie Rodgers. Tributes are very common in Country, at one time almost a glut on the market. The most tributed of them all, however, was and is Hank Williams.

Hank often liked to use the pseudonym "Luke the Drifter." He'd cut a record and no mention of Hank Williams would appear anywhere on it. He fooled me a couple of times back when he was recording on the old yellow MGM label. Almost everything he did had a soulful quality that came from early origins, establishing, alongside Bluegrass, a strain of White Soul.

Williams was among the earliest artists to write his own material, something fairly commonplace in recent times. Moreover, he was a master writer, a fine singer and a good performer. It used to infuriate me when he would do a song that would climb the Country charts, only to be immediately covered by an acceptably middle-of-the-road Pop artist and zoom up the segregated Pop charts to make tons of bucks and launch careers worth ten times what old Luke the Drifter could hope, in the early fifties, to make in a lifetime.

Once in a while I'd hear something really nice on the Pop stations and years later find out that Roy Acuff had written it, or that it had been originally a Country hit. It seemed that Pop, in order to survive, had to borrow from those people close to the roots.

I have a friend who plays black Blues slide guitar as well as Ronnie Wood

Merle Haggard

Hank Williams

would ever want to hear it, who gets livid with rage about how even the Rolling Stones have commercially ripped off black Blues from the Leadbelly source. Maybe. Leadbelly and others were not musically segregated at the time their music influenced groups like the Stones. It was a different story in the fifties when you had two sets of charts for the same music at the same moment in history. In the late sixties and early seventies the musical de-segregation trend produced some fine combinations.

Not too long after the Scruggs **Family and Friends** album, there appeared a three-record set, **Will the Circle Be Unbroken.** This album unites some of the best of the Grand Ol' Opry stars with other artists in a jam which would have been unlikely a few years previous — the Nitty Gritty Dirt Band, Earl Scruggs, Mother Maybelle Carter, Vassar Clements, Junior Huskey, Jimmy Martin, Doc Watson, Roy Acuff, Merle Travis, Norman Blake, and more. The album gets down to the honest-to-God Country music form I thought had been doomed in the sixties.

Into the seventies some of the better rockers and country-rockers began a romance with Country for a kind of incestuous Pop-Rock-Country **menage a trois.**

Austin, Bob Wills territory, seems to be becoming more and more a center for Country. Commander Cody and his Lost Planet Airmen recorded their **Deep in the Heart of Texas** album there at Armadillo World Headquarters in 1972. It's a good anthology of Country and fifties Rock & Roll. Leon Russell cut **Hank Wilson's Back**, an anthology of fifties Country and Rock. In this case Russell is more interested in Hank Williams, especially with one of his best songs, **I'm So Lonesome I Could Cry**. It's every bit as soulful as the original. Other cuts reflect Russell's Oklahoman familiarity with the beer-joint-jukebox brand of Country.

In 1975 Jerry Garcia did a form-stretching extension of hybridization with the album **Old And In the Way**, by artists expert in the complexities of Rock having a good time knee-deep in Bluegrass. Fiddler Vassar Clements is on the album, but I think it comes off as fair-to-middlin' Bluegrass per se, if that's what Garcia was aiming for. A near miss which redeems itself in the skills Garcia displays any time he picks up an instrument — in this case a five-string banjo. The vocals leave something to be desired if you're familiar with Bluegrass harmony. But there's no mistaking the excellence of Garcia and Clements on instrumentals.

Today Linda Ronstadt, the Eagles, New Riders of the Purple Sage, the Flying Burrito Brothers, Allman Brothers, Dylan's Rolling Thunder Revue, John Denver and C. W. McCall (with a new wrinkle for the AM and CB set via the trucker as folk hero) represent the current chain-reaction proliferation of Country-Rock-Pop hybridization. Ronstadt and Emmylou Harris seem best, along with the Eagles, at switch-hitting from Country to Rock. No chart can hold these hybridizers. They are as popular on small-town AM as they are on the hippest big-city FM. All the old divisions have fallen like sand castles, awash in a rising tide of Country fever.

Madison Avenue has caught the scent of Country green. Admen have found the Country sound just the thing to bring their pitch down to earth, and thus, presumably, more credible and effective. If you listen to radio or watch TV, you'll hear anything from a five-string banjo to country fiddles backing up commercials for everything from shampoo to breakfast cereals, from Toyotas to political spots.

In late 1974 I heard about a program being aired on listener-supported KPFK-FM Los Angeles called "Music, Black and White." It featured a lot of the old Country recordings and black Blues of a parallel period and earlier — the brainchild of one Nuwana Davis, a silken-voiced, soft-spoken young lady who hosted the show in the wee hours of Monday mornings. I'd always liked the style and feel of black Blues almost as much as I did Bluegrass. But, being white with a white Country background, I found that side of her program more familiar. Especially when she would dig up obscure cuts by the Louvins, Mac Wiseman and others. Put that kind of music back to back with Big Bill Broonzy and Elmore James, minus commercials, and you've got yourself a BLT deluxe. But then I got to thinking — what was it about these different forms that had such an equal appeal? I knew there was a common denominator. I could feel it, almost taste it, but for the life of me I couldn't put my finger on it. Finally I called Nuwana and asked what she thought it was. Without hesitation she replied, "Root music."

I went blank for a second, dumbfounded. In two words she had strung together all those loose pearls — Jimmie Rodgers, Leadbelly, Hank Williams, John Lee Hooker, Bob Dylan, Sun House, Roy Acuff — into one dazzling necklace.

Root music is all it's ever been, for me anyway. It describes a broad swatch that crosses the color lines and chart divisions. A definition I hope to see in the best dictionaries someday.

Somehow, in spite of the tremendous power and popularity of commercial music that appeals to a wide audience, root music was alive and well in the summer of 1975 when 8,000 people packed into a grassy hill-enclosed natural amphitheater about the size of two football fields on a ranch in the hills of Malibu for a Bluegrass festival. Cars were parked on each side of the winding mountain road for miles. Others were streaming back down the road, turned away because they didn't have tickets. Long-haired kids were climbing over fences, falling down chaparral hillsides, sneaking under forbidden barriers, or standing in long lines in the hot California sun. Among those there, I had to be the most amazed. And once again I felt that sense of vindication. My music had arrived. Looking around, I knew I'd never be alone in this love again. The crowd was a broad cross-section by age, with a surprisingly large number of both the very young and the early middle-aged. For concerts as they go it was an oddly quiet, almost pastoral scene. No self-hype about the music. Occasionally the crowd would vigorously applaud an especially good group or rendition. Lots of beer, grass and food. The unofficial attendance, including gate-crashers, was estimated at somewhere around 10,000.

After a while the beer and the dope started to take hold and groups of people started dancing, singing along and generally having a good time, hooting and cheering in a mini-Woodstock. Some of the performers used a certain amount of amplification, and if you wanted to get cute you might call what they played Newgrass. But any Bluegrass buff would agree that they stayed close to that high, lonesome sound from root days of yore.

In one set an eleven-year-old girl did one of the finest kick-ass fiddle renditions of **Orange Blossom Special** I've ever heard, and the crowd wouldn't let her off the stage. Everybody went nuts. Three encores and a standing ovation by 10,000 people later, a tear came to my eye. The circle was unbroken. I was a long way from 86th Street on the fashionable East Side. □

Merle Travis

LOST IN SPACE

BY SAMUEL JAMES MARONIE

An enemy agent slips aboard the Jupiter II, an elaborate flying saucer about to carry the first American family to pioneer the starry reaches of space. After sabotaging the ship's guidance system and robot, the villain is trapped aboard the spacecraft as it lifts off and finds himself, together with the others, lost in space . . .

Sounds like a great premise for a TV program, doesn't it? That's just what producer Irwin Allen thought when he approached the CBS network with his proposed series in the early 1960s. The resulting effort was eventually brought to the home screen in the form of 83 hour-episodes of one of the most fondly remembered, and hated, video outings on record.

The true story behind *Lost in Space* may be far more interesting than any of the episodes presented in the series' three-year run from 1965-1968. Beginning as a straight, albeit tongue in cheek adventure series, the show gradually transformed into a prime-time comedy hour, taking in outer-space beauty contests, overaged space-hippies and human carrot-men along the way. And if you think R2D2 and C3PO pioneered the Laurel & Hardy-esque space-comedy found in *Star Wars* then you've forgotten the antics of the bumbling Dr. Zachary Smith and his sarcastic robot companion.

In early 1964 Irwin Allen was one of a number of producers trying to interest CBS-TV in a new science fiction series. Fresh from his successful ABC entry, *Voyage to the Bottom of the Sea,* Allen approached network executives with his new project. Ardent Trekkies will recall that Gene Roddenberry was among these hopefuls, carrying an embryonic *Star Trek* under his arm. But Roddenberry lost; his day was to come later at another network. Allen's outline for a Swiss Family Robinson of outer space was accepted by the CBS brass and he was given the go-ahead to film a pilot for the network's further consideration.

The original format of the series involved the launching of the United States' first spacecraft carrying aboard an entire family, whose mission was to reach the star-sun Alpha Centauri in hopes of finding habitable planets to support earth's ever-growing population. Quick-frozen in glass cylinders, the crew would ride out the five-year

voyage in suspended animation while the ship's automatic pilot sped them along their way at light-speed. When a malfunction disables their ship, the family is automatically revived, only to find themselves lost and adrift in an unknown region of space. From that point they must voyage from planet to planet seeking their way to Alpha Centauri and/or a way back to mother earth. Certainly, in the course of their space-hopping, the family would encounter no small number of aliens, monsters and assorted perils designed to keep the audience glued to its collective seat.

That's basically what the pilot script looked like when it went before the cameras at 20th Century-Fox studios. Cast as Prof. John Robinson, patriarch of this wholesome bunch, was ex-Zorro Guy Williams; meanwhile, June Lockhart traded her gingham dress from *Lassie* for a silver lame space suit to fill the role of his strong and supporting wife, Maureen.

Angela Cartwright and Marta Kristen portrayed the Robinsons' daughters, Penny and Judy, respectively; Mark Goddard filled in as Major Don West, pilot of the ill-fated expedition. In an obvious attempt to provide a character for small fry to identify with, veteran child actor Billy Mumy was cast in the role of the young Will. Adding the formidable voice of announcer Bob May as the somber Robot, the cast was complete.

In assembling the final cut, an inspiration came to Allen that it might be more dramatically convenient if there was a regular member of the cast to supply a bit of villainy, a story plot, to the weekly episodes. Character actor Jonathan Harris was hastily recruited and integrated into the final product after all the other performers' scenes were shot. The producer's afterthought may well have been responsible for the series' long life.

Harris is seen in the opening episode as the military medic who gives the Robinsons their final check-up before lift-off. As the evil Dr. Zachary Smith, scenes of him sabotaging the Robot and guidance system were filmed, making him directly responsible for the resulting calamity. In fact, footage from the original pilot, incorporating the Robinsons' crash landing on an alien world and their exploration of some ancient ruins, were stretched into a half-dozen or so episodes. A sub-plot involving Smith's domination of the Robot and capture of pilot West were shot, providing further padding.

Harris' mugging and flagrant overacting were perfectly suited for this type of show. He chewed the scenery to bits in his dastardly attempts to dispose of the saccharinely sweet Robinson clan. Brandishing a loaded automatic and in complete control of the death-dealing Robot, he planned to murder the others and return to earth in the spaceship. Each time, despite his obvious efforts to do them in, they would smile sweetly and completely forgive him. Smith's wickedness must be savored in the first handful of episodes. It wouldn't last for long.

Maureen Robinson (June Lockhart) runs for her life in "One of Our Dogs is Missing"

Williams, Goddard and Mumy were regarded as the true stars of the show. But a funny thing happened. Viewers went wild over Harris' character and his fan mail soon outpulled that of the others combined. Quick to take note, Allen and the network gradually shifted the emphasis of the show to where Harris and Mumy began getting the lion's share of the scripts. The original stars were pushed into the background and served as little more than bit players. Obviously the intention was for Smith's nastiness to be offset by young Will's childlike innocence. On such an unlikely premise the show flourished.

In the weeks that followed, the Robinsons found themselves stalked by an alien wanting a machine back that could make dreams come true (that Smith had stolen); a hostile alien robot (which Smith was convinced was perfectly safe), along with other problems caused by the good Dr.'s lack of sound judgement.

Gone were Smith's cold-blooded attempts to murder the Robinsons; he would sooner scream and run in fear than pick up a firearm. He mellowed considerably to the level of a bumbling child, whose cowardice and selfishness led him into one silly situation after another. In one episode he swapped the Robot to a space-trader for a load of tasty vittles; in another he ran into a band of space-hillbillies who claimed a werewolf among their kin.

And if Smith's radical change in behavior wasn't bad enough, his former partner in crime, the Robot, soon followed suit. It became Will Robinson's pal as well as party to the ceaseless bickering between itself and Smith. The Dr. would usually hurl some addle-brained insult ("You bubble-headed booby!") to which the robot would retort with a similar comment attesting to Smith's laziness and overall dishonesty. Harris and his metallic friend often would entertain young visitors to the set with such exchanges while not before the cameras.

At this point the cast began to squawk. Williams, who found himself backed out of the show with such silly scripts, complained to his agent — who in turn complained to Irwin Allen. But to no avail. The revised format was too successful to tamper with. So Williams, Lockhart and the others had to make the best of the situation.

While *Lost in Space* lacked the overall quality and plausability of *Star Trek,* it would be unfair to condemn the show entirely. The first half-dozen episodes contained some genuine thrills, even considering the clinched storyline. Sequences in the first episode chronicling the sabotage of the ship and the Robot's subsequent rampage are quite exciting: the crash-landing, the exploration of the deserted planet and other highlights stand out in this author's mind. The Saturday-afternoon serial-like cliffhanger endings, always finding some member of the cast facing mortal danger — until next week, at least — harkened back to an earlier style of

moviemaking when action ruled.

Even such episodes as the two-part "The Keeper" (featuring the late Michael Rennie in a fine guest-star role as the curator of a cosmic zoo) and an appropriately schmaltzy Christmas show wherein Will returned to earth were quite interesting, despite their juvenile execution.

But the absurd was the rule and the exceptional stories were few and far between. The producers had fallen into a familiar science fiction trap of insisting on a weird creature every week, usually portrayed by stuntman Dawson Palmer. Advertising bears this out, often running something like: "Be sure and see this week's monster on the next episode of Lost In Space!"

To further carry on such antics, a series of press releases from the studio alluded to the fact that the Robot was indeed a genuine computer. Even the smallest child was aware that the character was nothing more than a man in a metal suit (powered by two motorcycle batteries and built at a cost of $15,000.) A slightly customized version of the automation may be seen on Saturday morning episodes of "Mystery Island" on "The Skatebirds" program.

During January of 1966 a true monster reared its head on the *Lost in Space* horizon. It was at this time that *Batman* debuted on ABC to instant success, driving the entire country Bat-mad and siphoning some of *Space's* ratings. The tug-of-war continued for the rest of the season and into the next year. When *Batman's* popularity waned and *Lost in Space* regained viewers, *Batman* producers countered by scheduling a couple of three-part episodes with hopes of attracting a larger audience. Their efforts were only mildly effective. Ironically, both shows were filmed at the same studio, 20th Century Fox, only a couple of stages away from each other on the lot.

Despite its many pitfalls, *Lost in Space* was renewed for a second season during the 1966-1967 CBS schedule. The show made the transition from black-and-white to color, a definite plus, considering the many colorful sets, costumes and makeups.

But if you think things were already silly enough script-wise, the first season's tomfoolery was just a warm-up for the new year.

Things got off to a shaky start with "Blast Off Into Space," with character actor Strother Martin as a grizzled space-prospector, complete with flea-bitten burro.

Yes, Comedy was King on the *Lost in Space* set — by direct orders of the network. It was this same season that *Star Trek* premiered on NBC, presenting a mature approach to science fiction themes. Taking stock of the competition, CBS reasoned that since *Trek* was deadly serious in its attitude, perhaps their SF series should be different. And since a partial transfer to comedy worked so well in the first season, why not pull out the plug and go all the way? The result was some of the most bizarre displays of science fiction film ever to cross the airwaves:

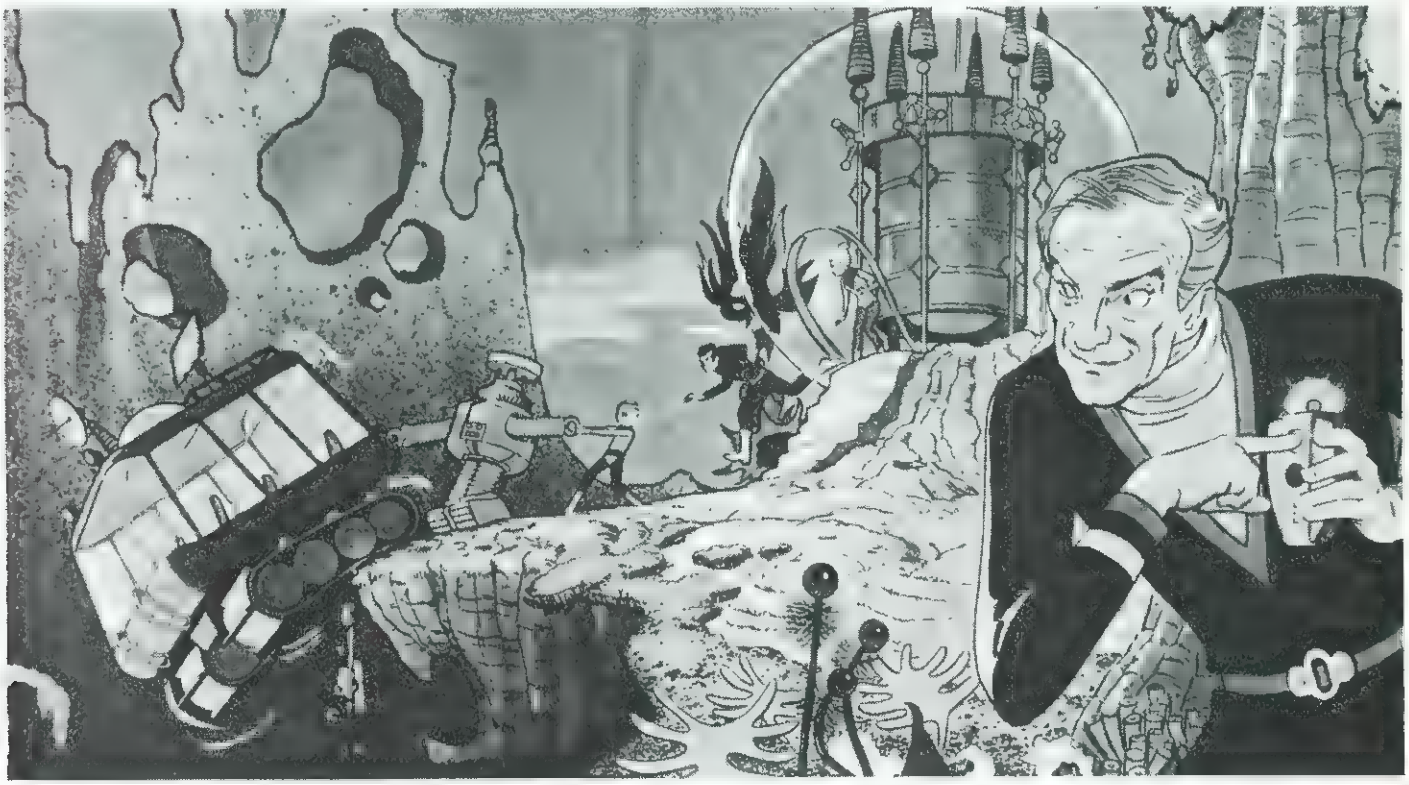
A space-faring Capt. Queeg-like character (attired in 18th century British navel garb) pressing Dr. Smith, Will and the Robot into service on his vessel, a strange cross between Victorian shipbuilding and futuristic spaceware.

A demented toymaker from another dimension captures Dr. Smith, Will and the Robot to work in his outlandish toyshop.

A batch of space-vikings and Valkyries land on the Robinsons' planet to create general chaos.

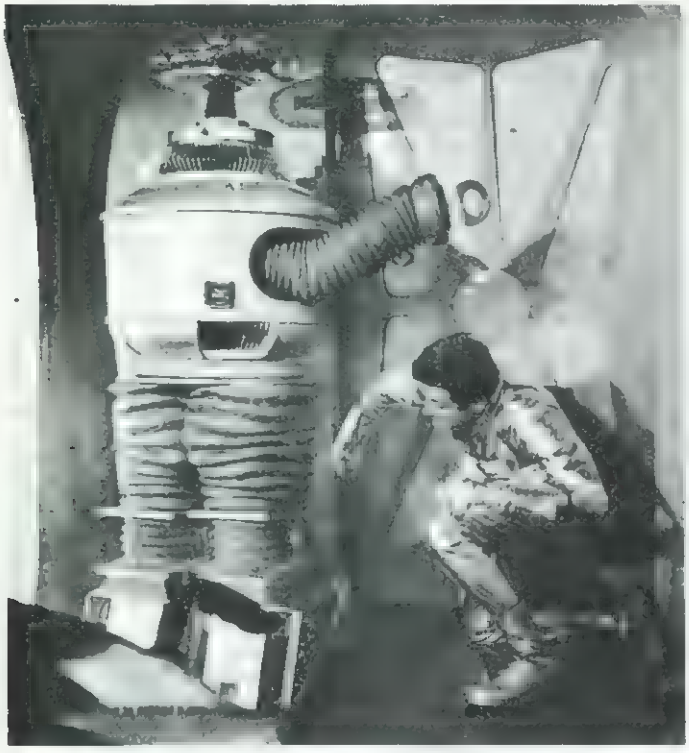
The network, in short, made no bones about catering to the tiny tots. Fairy tales such as Sleeping Beauty, King Arthur and The Beauty and The Beast were springboards for many second season episodes. While other cast members were occasionally spotlighted in individual stories, Harris/Dr. Smith still ruled the roost. Given the saccharine, one-dimensional personalities of the Robinsons, it is little wonder why this came about; Harris was easily the most colorful member of the expedition, with the Robot ranking not far behind.

Despite the often enjoyable helpings of low comedy, the producers followed one practice I, even as a child, particularly found annoying. For instance, if Smith was going to explore an underground cave he would invariably be wearing an old-style miner's helmet. In another episode he was conducting a seance and just happened to have had the foresight to have packed a swami's robe before he was trapped aboard the ship. Before the show ended, Smith had a wardrobe large enough to fill three spaceships. It's what the writer's call



Animation still from the 1973 *Lost in Space* ABC Saturday Superstar Movie

Don West (Mike Goddard) just misses being smashed by the robot who's been programmed to destroy in "The Reluctant Stowaway"



Dr. Smith (Jonathan Harris) is overwhelmed by the strangulating bear hug he receives from an alien monster in "The Golden Man"

"artistic license"; but in view of some of the silly plots they were trying to get me to swallow, maybe I'm even sillier to ask any questions.

By this time *Lost in Space* was one of the TV industry's biggest jokes. The very mention of its name would elicit guffaws. The show's ratings slipped during the latter part of the second season, but, amazingly, remained strong enough to merit renewal for a third.

The third season ushered in a few changes. Whereas during the previous year the Robinsons had been stuck on one planet, the first episode of the following season sent the family blasting off to seek out new worlds. They left their little dirt-ball, allowing the writers a little more legroom. They needn't have bothered. As usual, the first few shows contained some engaging ideas, only to be mangled by inept handling.

The Robinsons' ship docks with a huge space-freighter carrying criminals frozen in suspended animation, whom Dr. Smith promptly thaws out.

"Visit to a Hostile Planet" hurled the Jupiter II through a space/time warp, depositing the ship on earth in 1947, whereupon the crew is mistaken for invading aliens.

An abandoned android manufacturing device springs to life, churning out duplicates of Dr. Smith by the dozens (as if one wasn't bad enough.)

The show's ratings worsened to the point where *Lost in Space* was consistently dragging at the bottom of the Nielsen barrel. Apparently the public had grown tired of the ludicrous goings-on and chose to ignore the series altogether. But while CBS's inevitable cancellation surprised no one in particular, it was not the end.

All 83 episodes were promptly sold into syndication, that never-never land of TV time which needs to be filled, and still can be seen on many stations today. As a result of this revival, many *Lost in Space* fans have come out of the closet to express their admiration for the show on a fantasy level — not to be taken seriously, but simply enjoyed. The expression "cult following" is overused today, but there exists a devoted legion of *Lost in Space* fans — as well as devout enthusiasts of Irwin Allen's other shows *Voyage to the Bottom of the Sea, The Time Tunnel* and *Land of the Giants*.

Most of the cast members did not suffer any problems finding subsequent employment; many can still be seen by watching an average evening of TV. Mumy appeared on a recent TV movie, *A Sunshine Christmas;* Angela Cartwright guested on an episode of *Logan's Run;* Mark Goddard landed a prestigious role in Liza Minnelli's Broadway review, *The Act*. Harris, after many guest-starring roles on various series, landed a regular part — in a science fiction series — as the dignified Professor Gampu on Saturday morning's *Space Academy*.

Special mention should be made of the many talented set-designers, costumers and makeup men who contributed much to the *Lost in Space* series. Television is notoriously small-budgeted, and the talented artisans working with the production did their best in the framework of little money. Particular kudos go to Dan Striepeke and John Chambers, whose imaginative cosmetic work saved many of the episodes from total mediocrity; as creators of the *Planet of the Apes* makeup, they even managed to insert a prototype of the simian appliances in a third-season opus, "The Fugitives of Space."

TV has indeed outgrown the Buck Rogers-style situations featured in so many *Lost in Space* episodes. But the series at no time could ever be called dull, a charge all too often true of much so-called prestigious TV fare today. □

Fanfare FORUM

● *Well, so much for quarterly publication between issues 1 and 2. Production of this, embarrassingly only our second issue in a year, was beset by many problems, not the least of which was the unexpected success of the first issue. When we metamorphosed ye olde* **Graphic Story Magazine** *into this thing of wonder we call* **Fanfare,** *your ever-faithful publisher optimistically but conservatively produced that first issue on a let's-see-how-it-does-before-we-shell-out-a-small-fortune basis. Very little material was prepared in advance for the second issue until results had come in on the first. The main result was that we had to reprint 2000 copies to fill incoming orders after the original 4000 run was sold out only micro-seconds after coming off the press. We could have used another 2000, bringing the grand total to 8000, but when it became apparent that we could spend a lot of time and money reprinting and reprinting our first issue ad nauseam, we decided we'd best stop futzing around and get on with number 2. Since we didn't have much advance material on hand, that issue, the one you're reading now, was started virtually from scratch—almost like suffering birth pains of number 1 all over again.*

This, then, is an open invitation for article submissions, preferably in the form of query letters and outlines, from freelance writers who might be reading these words. Every writer has a pet subject that no magazine in its right mind would ever find room for. That's exactly the kind of thing suited for **Fanfare.** *Our boundaries are the popular arts: film, television, radio, comics, animation, music and related topics. And if you have some particular aberrant interest you'd like to write about, drop us a note on that, too.*

Some credits were inadvertently left out of the first issue, among them being the artists who did the front cover **Wizards** *painting. This was drawn by Mike Ploog and painted by Johnnie Vita, originally a scene intended to be used as poster art until one thing led to another over at 20th Century-Fox and they ended up commissioning the William Stout poster art with which you're probably more familiar. Mr. Stout, himself a student of movie poster art, appears in this issue with a feature on that very subject.*

Photo credits were missing right and left, so to give belated credit where it's due: the back cover Lynda Carter/Wonder Woman color shot came to us through the courtesy of Vic Ghidalia of ABC-TV in New York; photos of **Mad** *magazine editor Al Feldstein by Mark Evanier; vintage EC photos of Bill Gaines, Gloria Orlando and Nancy Siegel furnished by Fred Von Bernewitz; photos of the present-day Bill Gaines, Jerry De Fuccio, John Putnam, Jack Davis and Marie Severin provided by the self-same John Putnam; publicity still of Jackson Bostwick as Captain Marvel from the prodigious autograph collection of Gregory R. Jackson Jr.; Superman stills, all six of them, from the David Collins archives; Salvador Dali painting reproduced from a book loaned by Glenn Bray; the photo of Jim Morrison furnished by Greg* **Who Put The Bomp** *Shaw; and the source of the Russell Myers photo remains a mystery to this day.*

We now segue into letters on the first issue. Thanks to all who wrote and to the many whose articles helped make **Fanfare** *No. 2 possible. We'll get this magazine out on a quarterly schedule, or a reasonable facsimile thereof, if it kills us.* —*Bill and Mark*

Marty Pahls
Chicago, Illinois

Thank you for *Fanfare* No. 1. I do not intend to renew my subscription but I feel I should tell you why not, as *Graphic Story Magazine* has brought me so much pleasure and knowledge in the past.

I did enjoy the Feldstein interview and some of the letters, pickup material from GSM. And I am certainly not against specialist mags with fact/critique (hopefully with emphasis on the former) articles on film, rock, TV, etc. I even buy them occasionally.

By specializing in comics (word used advisedly in preference to the pretentious gobbledygook neologism "graphic story"—cf., "blunt-edged earth-breaking instrument for the construction of entrenchments") you were near, frequently at, the top of the fanzine field. You should have been proud; there are hundreds of fanzines and several good ones.

By generalizing and opening up to every popular communications field, past and present, you will fall between all stools and flat on your ass.

For a case in point we need go no further than the covers of No. 1. Fellas, if I want to look at a handout 8 x 10 glossy of Lynda Carter or Bakshi's *Wizards* I can pick up a daily newspaper which runs 'em alongside or as part of the theatres' paid advertising. Did you even ask Al Feldstein about the possibility of running one or two of his beautiful SF oil paintings on your cover? Fans haven't seen them and one is not likely to have them crammed in one's face by *TV Guide.*

Was "Rock, Drugs and the Beatles" printed as a joke, or because nobody on your staff knows or cares about rock and you felt obliged to devote seven pages to rock because it is There? I am familiar with crank Noebel from my former employment with the *National Tattler, Candid Press,* et al., where his Jesus/hatred stuff was always good for a screaming headline on page 1. But I would rather see, say, a long and specific interview with Jerry Iger on his shop activities in the 1940s and '50s, naming names unraveling mysteries about who inked whose pencils on *Sheena,* etc. Can you guys really justify your reprint of this kumquat's J.C. garbage over my suggestion, or something similar?

Guys, in 1958 there was this EC fan called Marty Pahls who put out this 100-copy crudzine when there was no EC and no other EC fans to buy it. It only lasted two issues but I have survived to the present, just as avid a fan as I was then. My crudzine was called *Fanfare* and it was no patch on GSM but my collaborators and I knew our limitations (and knew the value of *having* limitations) and we did the best we could within them. That's why I think my *Fanfare,* while not exceptionally good, was better than yours.

Looking at your *Fanfare* No. 1, a possibility—call it a suspicion—suggests itself. Are you angling for newsstand distribution? Is that why we see Ms. Carter, and not a Feldstein painting, on the wrapper? Are you dreaming of the big bucks — "Ditch the comics (pardon me; the graphic stories), crank in the movies (pardon me; *film*), TV, and then, move over *Rolling Stone.*" Before you decide to devote your No. 2 to cover-to-cover reprints of *Star Wars* giveaways, you might consider the fate of a well-known "oldies" magazine. It started as a fanzine for 1950s vocal group R&B records; each issue was better than the last, with more pages, more photos, slick paper, better reproduction—all based on carefully researched, factual articles and interviews and discographies. We fans read every word. Came the fateful day when my sub copy arrived with a cover photo, not of the Ravens or the Orioles or the Swallows, but of Elton John. It seems the editors had heard the sweet siren warble of newsstand distribution, and the bird groups suddenly hit the shitcan.

You can guess the rest. That was the last ish I received. I was burned for my sub plus $20 of ads I'd sent them, because of their greed. But what hurt more was losing a mag I devoured avidly. They did great with the bird groups, but Elton John was their albatross.

Because of such wonderful material as you've done on Basil Wolverton, Alex Toth, Howard Nostrand, Harry Harrison, etc., etc., etc., may your fate be kinder—and somewhere, someday, may you print more of the same.

● *From the foregoing morass of dire predictions and misinformation, you're right about one thing: we are angling for newsstand distribution. You're wrong about almost everything else, including ill-founded assumptions regarding the R&B mag referred to,* **Bim Bam Boom.** *More on that in a moment.*

A trial distribution of 500 copies of **Fanfare** *No. 1 on Los Angeles area newsstands has sold 80% at this writing, and No. 2 is expected to do equally well in both L.A. and beyond as other retail distributors handle the magazine.* **Fanfare** *presently has about twice the circulation of the previously best-*

selling GSM issue, so eulogies for the new format are a tadge premature. Mail response from GSM long-timers is 99% favorable; not one subscriber took us up on last issue's money-back-if-not-satisfied offer. Subscription renewals, in fact, are arriving at as good a clip or better than GSM's ever did. Sorry you're no longer among that enlightened group.

For those who came in late, ***Fanfare*** *is a successor-in-interest to a limited circulation effort called* ***Graphic Story Magazine*** *and, before that,* ***Fantasy Illustrated.*** *It dealt with experimental comics and interviews with comic creators, and in that aim it was considered by quite a few people to be the best of its kind. GSM only went so far, however, and after 16 issues the format was wearing thin. Comic books are nifty—we, Bill and Mark, both have thousands—but there are other things in life. We think GSM has undergone the same change that many comic book fans experience. After immersing themselves in funnybook fandom, many fans grow bored, possibly because of the lack of diversification that comic books have to offer. Specialization is not always an asset, especially in an art form that has so many crannies left undelved. So those fans often move on to other things, as has GSM, encompassing common interests like movies, television, comedy records, animation and so on. Scratch a hardcore comics fan and the chances are you'll find a media freak underneath.*

A painting by Al Feldstein would have been nice, but the painting from ***Wizards*** *we ran was nice, too. It was never printed anywhere else, so you can't exactly find it on the cover of* ***TV Guide*** *or in your daily paper.*

The R&B mag ***Bim Bam Boom*** *was put out by a New York-based partnership that published its final issue in 1974. For the story behind their format expansion and why it went under, here's a reply from its former editor:*

Ralph M. Newman
Editor, *Time Barrier Express*

The last issue of *Bim Bam Boom,* No. 13, was indeed the one carrying the Elton John piece. This was a 2-page story entitled "Elton John Remembers When Rock Was Young," a commentary on Elton's love for and influence by '50s R&R. Only the title of the article appeared on the cover, and no issue of BBB ever bore a photo of Elton John. The cover photo for No. 13 was of The Ronettes.

The Elton John piece was introduced in order for the contemporary music enthusiasts to understand that what exists today is built on yesterday. Putting a bird group on the cover, however, is not the way to reach these people in order to teach them this.

The statement that "the bird groups suddenly hit the shitcan," implying that BBB abandoned R&B group coverage in search of commercial, mass-oriented success, is totally ludicrous. Issue No. 13 contained a total of 92 pages, of which two were devoted to Elton John. This issue also contained stories on The Du Droppers, The Carols, The Five Sharps, The Robins, a Spark discography, etc. In fact, if one were to remove not only the Elton John but also The Ronettes—on the theory that they too were a commercial success during the '60s and not an obscure '50s group—what remains is more coverage of vocal groups than in any previous issue of BBB.

BBB was as much a magazine for record collectors as it was for the fans of the vocal group sound. Subjects such as The Ronettes, The Tokens and Charlie Feathers (rockabilly) were introduced in recognition of new areas of record collecting. There was a time when the only collectors of vintage R&R records were strictly R&B oriented, but that certainly was not the case in 1974 (when No. 13 was published) and is far less so today.

Finally, BBB did not disintegrate because of an unsuccessful attempt at expansion. There was some negative reaction from the hardcore, but the overall reaction to BBB's changing format was overwhelmingly positive and supportive. It disintegrated because of severe internal disagreements among its principals. It got so severe, as a matter of fact, that it had to be settled in court, and I have an outstanding judgement against Bim Bam Boom Enterprises, Inc. to this very day. Nobody got burned worse than I did when it went under, both financially and in terms of years of wasted work and time. However, I totally sympathize with anyone who got hurt by BBB, including Mr. Pahls. When I assumed the editorship of *The Time Barrier Express,* and although I was absolutely under no obligation to do so, I established a program by virtue of which all former BBB subscribers were offered some form of restitution. It was the best I could do, and it was very well received. I have encountered no bitterness such as this in a long, long time now, and do not understand why the author of this letter was not given to avail himself of the compensation which TBE offered.

● *Thank you, Mr. Newman.* ***Fanfare*** *recommends* ***Time Barrier Express*** *to everyone interested in vintage rock 'n' roll, rhythm & blues, rockabilly and related, with a sample issue available for $1.50 from Time Barrier Express, P.O. Box 206, Yonkers, New York 10710.*

—Bill and Mark

Anne Davenport
Portland, Oregon

I can only agree with *Fanfare's* opinion of *Batman.* I've never read the comic books but I saw the show and it's pretty awful. I suppose it's good for a few laughs on a rainy afternoon but that was it. I recall several years back when I was much younger when my older sisters tried to get me to stop watching *Star Trek* in favor of *Batman.* They didn't even come close to swaying me.

When I got through the article about Abbott and Costello I just thought to myself, "I'm not surprised." I've seen a couple of their films (my father commented that one about half the family was watching at the time had been made in three weeks) and they brought forth few laughs. The Abbott and Costello routine is hopelessly worn out. I've seen more imitations of the tall, thin, smart guy/short, fat, dumb guy bit than I have of the original act. Somehow I'm not surprised to find that Abbott and Costello got their jokes from someplace else because those same old lines have been employed in bad pictures and television since the duo's demise.

I saved the Rock, Drugs and Beatles article till last because I didn't particularly want to read it. From its title it sounded to me like it was going to be some gossipy excursion into the (gasp) scandalous lives of the Beatles. Boy, was I surprised! Instead of finding the intimate, dreary details of a group of rock stars I discovered a semi-paranoid rock 'n'roll music hater. The theme of the article is obvious: rock 'n' roll is bad music. Fine. Why? Because it is corrupting America's youth, that's why. Wrong. But at least the man tries to put forth his argument in a slightly organized fashion. He starts off with statements from a few experts about rock 'n' roll's poor music quality. Okay. Then he goes on about how rock is bad for plants. All right, it probably is; acid rock doesn't exactly calm the nerves. But then the author, having set his stage, drives his attack forward about the "hidden dangers of rock 'n' roll" with a semi-McCarthy-like, paranoid assault on the connection between music and communism. First the author names some rather obvious references to communism in some rock 'n' roll lyrics and then he gives a brief account of a short takeover of Columbia University by leftist revolutionaries. The next paragraph makes the connection between rock and revolution: "The SDS clientele [the revolutionaries mentioned above] quite naturally feed on Marx's *Communist Manifesto,* Lenin's *State and Revolution* and must have consumed Mao's *Quotations* in their quest for the know-how in establishing a Communist society. But beyond this, they also devour their subversive underground press and that form of rock 'n' roll which not only drowns in noise but in drugs, promiscuous sex and revolution." This passage and others like it set rock up as a major factor in causing revolutionary activities while in the same sentence branding all such events as one of the evil no-nos of American youth. I seriously doubt that a "radical" will take over a college campus or march in a peace rally over a song, no matter how "subversive" its content. Nor do I think it will drive a teenager to communist ideas without the help of a healthy dislike for the "establishment." But the most offensive part of this section is that it takes *all* rock under the communist-oriented umbrella, and that simply isn't true.

The article is fairly factual about its information on rock,

drugs and the Beatles, but is hopelessly outdated. All references to time are made about events that happened before 1971. The Beatles are discussed as if they were still together, no mention is made at all to the rising hazard of cocaine, and marijuana is talked about as being second only to heroin on the dangerous narcotics list. But the most insulting part of this article is that it uses these facts to slur the music as a whole. Frankly, I like rock music. I hate the world it has generated. I see the world of rock stars as filled with screaming, teenaged groupies, narcotics, here-today-gone-tomorrow singers and noisy, obnoxious concerts. I agree with the opinion that the rock world is corrupt. But Mr. Noebel keeps harping over and over again that rock is responsible for drug addiction, campus riots, communist conspiracies, etc. Social problems like war, poverty, racial prejudice, political corruption and the like cause unrest and revolution, not music.

Dwight Decker
Elmwood Park, Illinois

Noebel's article on the Beatles was a delight—in that it represents an unpopular and unheard-from viewpoint. The fact that pop music contains references to drugs will probably surprise none of your readers, and very likely few will even care, let alone view the matter with Noebel's alarm, but I'm glad you printed the man's article without apologizing for it, attempting to argue with it, or sneering at it. You just gave the man his time on the soapbox and let his logic or lack of it speak for itself.

Has anyone ever commented how ridiculous real people look in superhero costumes? Lynda Carter in the patriotic swimsuit points it up once more, and I don't think it's just the klutzy costume design. It's just hard to take anyone seriously who wears a skimpy uniform better suited for a trapeze artist. Take the stars off the sleeves, and the uniform worn by Cathy Lee Crosby in her version of Wonder Woman is much more credible.

Well, we're too used to seeing glamour photos of women wearing skimpy or tight-fitting clothes for super-heroines to seem *too* strange in the comics, except when the costume design is spectacularly ridiculous (such as the attire affected by Ms. Marvel, which isn't quite so bad now that the pointless open front has been covered over). Masculine costumery is another matter. Adam West looked absurd in his Batman suit, though that may have been due to his pendulous belly. Still, no one, not even Arnold Schwarzenegger, is built like a superhero, and no fabric known to man adheres to rippling muscles the way costume cloth does in the comics. Translated to the screen, a man in tights and sweatshirt, even with a cape, just looks silly. Other design elements, such as the garish colors and emblems, combine to make the fighter for justice look like a leftover from a circus for dements.

Superheroes work pretty well on the printed page, perhaps because they're usually seen in fantastic situations and with characters often even more bizarrely dressed, and the connection to real life is tenuous indeed.

● *One reason why I think movie superheroes look klutzy in costume is because just about every film of this type has been done with a thoroughly mundane approach totally devoid of stylization. Such lack of imagination only forces attention on an unreal-looking superhero functioning in what's supposed to be the real world. Most old and new movie versions of comics characters seem to take place in some strange limbo where heavily made-up costumed sideshow freaks are accepted as a part of normal surroundings. It's like Spider-man had accidentally wandered onto a Kojak set and the crew just kept on filming as though nothing were out of the ordinary. The Batman TV show, for all its attempts at comic book imagery, only reached the level of heavy-handed camp. If someone tried a more lyrical approach and went about it right, the effect could be as convincing as it is in comics and animated cartoons where costume heroes and their backgrounds are all of a piece.*

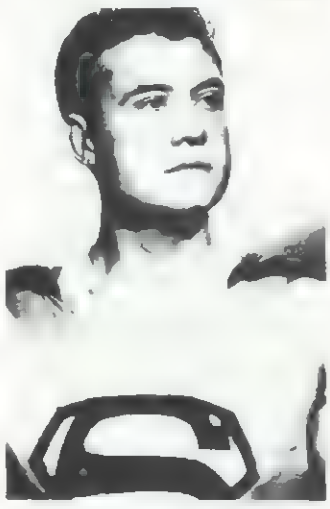
The producers of the 1959 movie ***Li'l Abner*** *wisely decided to keep the Broadway musical's cartoon depiction of Dogpatch intact by using stylized sets on a sound stage instead of going on location in Appalachia or wherever. Believability slips a notch only when Abner and Daisy Mae visit Washington D.C., their comic strip figures seen in the representational setting of a Pentagon war office.*

For me the most convincing parts of the early '50s Superman TV series are the origin episode's planet Krypton scenes, using futuristic-looking cardboard sets. The exotic costume designs fit right in. When Superman is later seen on Earth's mundane countryside and city streets, the effect is far less persuasive.

Not that a superhero movie would have to use obviously artificial backgrounds to be convincing. A similar impression could be had with controlled art direction, photography and editing where the costumed hero would be part of a designed, lyrical environment.

On the other hand is the idea that a superhero should rightly appear out of place among everyday settings because said hero is, let's face it, a fantasy character being made to exist in the real world. The point has its own inescapable logic.

—Bill



Landon Chesney
Chattanooga, Tennessee

Interesting issue, no doubt about that. And some interesting questions were raised. Has rock been taken over by sinister forces? Were Abbott and Costello really funny? Was *Panic* a panic? And who is Reggie Capes anyway?

Fanfare definitely fits the format you've been moving toward—and it's definitely a less cumbersome title than *Graphic Story Magazine*. Fact is, the anticipated breakthrough that might have justified the original GSM concept never materialized. There are no graphic stories to report on. The last justifiable word on that subject is undoubtedly the detailed and learned analysis of Krigstein's work (with particular emphasis on "Master Race") by Benson, Kasakove and Spiegelman. Prior to Krigstein the work of Eisner and diverse others still merits attention. But after that, virtually zilch.

I say virtually only in deference to Crumb. But I don't think his approach was what Richard Kyle had in mind when he more or less coined the term "graphic story" and had us all anticipating the next big breakthrough that was certain to come. I'm still interested in why it never happened. Or maybe it did and I missed it. I think Crumb would be the first to agree that there should be more to the post-Krigstein era than just Fritz the Cat.

Feldstein touched on this in his interview. Evidently he was planning to move in a new direction, literally as well as figuratively. It appears that Krigstein's concept of breakdown, especially on "Master Race," suggested that Feldstein's approach was too rigid. I don't suppose it comes as a surprise to anyone to learn that neither DC nor Marvel was interested in establishing an experimental unit with Al at the helm. Perish the thought. What if he attracted a discriminating audience? There is one thing in favor of cultivating the kind of audience that television and comics seem to write for: you are under absolutely no obligation to keep topping yourself. Just establish the most routine, pedestrian level that the market will tolerate, never deviate except for an occasional regression, and your success is virtually assured.

On the other hand, who can dispute the logic of these men? Marvel and DC have been in business a long time. They've made fortunes from one of the most basic and universal axioms of business: nobody ever lost money underestimating the taste of the American public. Given the self-evident truth of that statement, the wonder is that anything unusual or different ever makes it to the marketplace.

Given the existence of the undergrounds, and alternative publications such as GSM, there *should* have been a breakthrough despite the resistance of the established comics pub-

lishers. Particularly given the anticipation that existed in fandom in the sixties—and the machinery and vehicles that were set up to convey the next breakthrough—it would seem that it was almost inevitable that it would happen. Yet nothing did. It would be interesting to know why.

● *On that question Fanfare Forum is open to all theories, impressions and brainstorms. In the sixties GSM did its share of keeping the propaganda ball rolling, promoting the idea that the day of the graphic story was here or was just around the corner, sure to bring in a new era. We believed it could be done. Did anyone else?*

—Bill

Jay Kinney
San Francisco, California

The piece which interested me most in the issue was the Feldstein interview. Altogether a diplomatic interview. Perhaps too diplomatic, as I thought Spiegel let Feldstein get off the hook a number of times. To think about *Mad* is to ponder the formulation of humor, the subordination of creative spontaneity to comfortable success. I wish the interview had grappled with that instead of letting Feldstein merely list innovations'made 20 years ago. When you realize that Joe Pilati and Kenneth Pitt were validly criticizing *Mad* back in 1962 for having fallen into formula, it is absurd to see that Al is still denying it 15 years later—15 years marked by very little change at *Mad*. The *Lampoon* may be, in Feldstein's words, a bunch of kids trying to shock their parents. *Mad,* conversely, reads as if it were done by a bunch of parents trying to mollify their kids.

All of which is not to begrudge *Mad* its success, though its success is no doubt why it has been so shy about innovating.

Capes' *Panic* piece was welcome if overstated. The comic *is* often overlooked. In fact, I wrote an article for Dave Herring's old fanzine *Odd* around ten years ago arguing the superiority of *Panic* over *Mad*. In time since, I've reconsidered my opinions and find that the old *Mad* stories age better, for whatever that's worth. Also, since they lacked that under-structure of Kurtzman layouts, the stories in *Panic* seem more visually cluttered and awkward somehow.

● *I too, thought the Feldstein interview floundered at times in its own diplomacy. There was one question I wanted to put to* ***Mad's*** *editor and it went something like this: Editor Feldstein and Publisher Gaines have both stated, time and again, that they were proud of the divergence of art styles in EC comics; that artists were encouraged to develop their own styles. Feldstein said precisely that in the* ***Fanfare*** *interview. Why then, I wanted to know, has* ***Mad*** *gone the opposite route? There is little turnover of artists and, when new ones do arrive, they imitate the* ***Mad*** *mainstays. New artist Harry North is Mort Drucker, rolled into one. To a lesser extent, so is Angelo Torres. There have been at least two—maybe three—Jack Davis mimics given try-outs in* ***Mad,*** *plus their newest addition, Bob Jones, seems to be doing Drucker, Davis and Woodbridge in rotation. Considering* ***Mad's*** *high art rates, it is difficult to believe they can't find artists who don't draw like Mort Drucker. You might not be able to prove that* ***Mad*** *writing hasn't progressed—but there certainly hasn't been a new art style in the magazine since Sergio Aragones in 1962.*

It is perhaps significant that ***Mad*** *opted to ignore its twentieth and twenty-fifth anniversaries. It wouldn't do for everyone to realize that the magazine is twice as old as its average reader.*

—Mark

Ann Zumwinkle
Los Angeles, California

OK. First I see on the stands a new magazine featuring Necron 99 on the cover. I am an art major and I saw and enjoyed *Wizards,* and I like the article. Now I rapidly read through an interview with Al Feldstein and interesting articles on TV superheroes and Broom-Hilda. 44 pages from where I began I read a parody of John Birch pamphlets attacking everything from the Beatles to teenagers in general.

Well, if it isn't a parody, where was the disclaimer at the end?

Mr. Noebel advocates censorship of drug related songs, but you as artists should know that censorship of the arts has always been to the detriment of the arts. You as artists should realize that this mudslinging at rock artists is not an informative article but thinly veiled prejudice. Are you catering to an ultra-reactionary audience? I don't question the validity of Mr. Noebel's statements—I question the appearance of an article such as this in an "art" magazine. And the preaching and sarcasm used by Mr. Noebel immediately made it much less than an informative essay. I like all types of music, love all types of art, am open to many types of culture and philosophy, but I am closed to closed-mindedness. The article left me angry.

If you are going to advertise yourselves as a Magazine of Popular Culture and All the Arts you must branch out from comic book art and include modern photography, cinematography, music of all types (without bias) and crafts as well as Bill Bergeron, Alex Nino and Frank Frazetta. I wish you lots of luck.

● *Everyone wants to know why we ran the article, "Rock, Drugs and the Beatles." Okay, here's why: The Reverend Noebel's article originally appeared in a publication not likely to be seen by many readers. And it raised a point that, righteous or wrong, is held by many people in this nation. The editors of* ***Fanfare*** *do not necessarily subscribe to such notions but we do like the idea of exposing controversial views on the Arts to our readers, even if we do horrify a few folks. Most of the objections to the article said, in effect, "How could you give this man a forum?"*

No, Ms. Zumwinkle, we are not catering to an ultra-reactionary audience. But I don't think we're supposed to only publish articles that we expect our readership to concur with, either. I have a pet theory about controversy and, unlucky you, you've given me just cause to segue into it.

I think people in this country are far too afraid of having different views aired. There is an obsession with rebuttal that I find distasteful. I am reminded of when Jane Fonda was making a speech about Vietnam at a local high school some years ago. A local ex-actor reactionary named Bob Dornan (now a U.S. Congressman) was following her around as a kind of one-man truth squad to instantly rebut anything and everything Fonda said. At this high school she was invited, he was not. But he forced his way to the podium to demand the right to present what he called an "alternative viewpoint" to her speech. Ranting about Equal Time laws, he insisted that when she said "We should not be in Vietnam," he had the right to immediately commandeer the mike to say, "We should be in Vietnam." God forbid the woman should utter three contiguous sentences without rebuttal.

Whether he or she was right is irrelevant. The point is that there was this terrible fear of hearing one side of an argument; this presupposition that the audience would not know there was an "alternative viewpoint" unless it was immediately presented. The late Lou Gordon, who did an interview and opinion TV show out of Detroit, did a Liberal version of Dornan's trick. When cross-examining someone of differing opinion, Gordon did horrendously thorough rebuttals, challenging everything propounded in minute detail. Once he had a Nazi on and I tuned in, a bit curious to know the thought processes of such a person. But Gordon got involved in such rebuttal overkill that I never did find out. He, like so many people on television, was unwilling to let the Nazi speak his piece and to let the viewers evaluate the position for themselves. In this, I think Gordon often did his cause a disservice, for he probably ended up with a viewing audience comprised principally of people who already agreed with him in the main. Too often we go out of our way to avoid hearing other sides. The kids at the high school where Jane Fonda spoke invited her, but not someone who could intelligently present the other side (someone other than Bob

Dornan, in other words). They were wrong in this. People should expose themselves to both sides. But we should not get so obsessed with presenting both sides that we rebut both factions in numbing alternation and give neither side the chance to be considered. When an avowed Communist appears on TV (or a Reverend Noebel in ***Fanfare****), people who probably profess a belief in free speech shriek that the opinion is unworthy of airing. What they don't understand is that free speech can't exist unless they are willing to grant it, without loopholes, to those whose opinions they abhor.*

Ms. Zumwinkle says she is closed to close-mindedness; that "censorship of the arts has always been to the detriment of the arts." Agreed. But she seems to think we should have censored Noebel, and so do several other readers whose reactions ranged from ridicule to outrage. Anything that can make that many people that mad was certainly worth seven pages.

And, just for the record, I thought the piece to be 87% inane and, when first suggested, Spicer had to talk me into its inclusion. We all learn.

—Mark

Bhob Stewart
Somerville, Massachusetts

Noebel lost me somewhere in the middle of the rock-drugs-Beatles article. Certainly well-researched, from many newspaper clippings, but I note that he conveniently avoids discussing the fact that there was plenty of drug music recorded *before* the Sixties. The article also has a lot of silly misinformation, most notably the paragraph in which he wants the reader to believe that heroin, marijuana and LSD produce similar effects. John Lennon's comment to Jann Wenner (originally in the February 4, 1971 *Rolling Stone*) about the initial letters of *Lucy In the Sky With Diamonds:* "I swear to God, or swear to Mao, or to anybody you like, I had no idea it spelled LSD . . . I didn't even see it on the label. I didn't look at the initials. I don't look — I mean I never play things backwards. I listened to it as I made it. It's like there will be things on this one, if you fiddle about with it. I don't know what they are. Everytime after that, though I would look at the titles to see what it said, and usually they never said anything."

It's funny no one has ever noticed all the *other* songs which have the initial letters LSD in the titles. *Land of My Sunset Dreams* by Wendell Hall, composer of *It Ain't Gonna Rain No Mo'. Land Where the Sweet Daddies Grow,* recorded by bandleader Freddie "Schicklefritz" Fisher. *The Land of Sultans' Dreams,* written by Victor Herbert in 1911. *Let's Sail to Dreamland,* recorded by Guy Lombardo in 1938. *Let's Say Goodnight with a Dance* from the 1941 Olsen & Johnson *Sons O' Fun* Broadway show. *Little Spanish Dancer,* recorded by Hawaiian-style steel guitarist Roy Smeck. *Look! Look! It's Raining Sunshine Drops,* recorded by the Page Cavanaugh Trio. Also, Irving Berlin's constant use of the LSD initials in song titles over a period of two decades proves conclusively that he was not only a song plugger but also a song "pusher." How else can one interpret *Variety's* statement at the beginning of his career that he "was a newcomer shooting up fast in Tin Pan Alley"? And we all know what he *really* meant by *White Christmas,* don't we?

The Al Feldstein interview was the issue's high point for me. I think Gaines was right about reading stories aloud. In fact, I read them aloud in schoolyards to classmates many months before he wrote his editorial suggesting stories be read aloud. I had already discovered how effective and fun they were that way, but I also discovered that the lettering device of making certain words *bold* did not tally with the dramatic emphasis. I could never figure out why they didn't match up. But now, after 25 years, I think I understand. If Feldstein really wasn't into the reading aloud approach (that misleading editorial has always implied he was), and if Feldstein chose the words to be bold, then the explanation is clear. He was picking the bold words for design reasons, not dramatic reasons.

Perhaps Feldstein doesn't realize that often EC artists are credited with an EC story because no individual writing credits appeared on EC stories! Everyone knows who the artist is, but in the writing area the true author is always in doubt, not being listed in *The EC Checklist* but only stray random comments about Wessler, Mendlesohn, Oleck, etc. — which always make one a little dubious about which were the Feldstein stories, which the Feldstein stories in collaboration with Gaines, which the Feldstein editing of a script by an outsider. Marvel, on the other hand, lets everyone know exactly who did what, certainly an aid to future historians and critics. If, however, the exact writing credits of EC are not cleared up in this decade, then that will all be lost forever. And it seems like a real challenge. Gaines' records are lost. Memory is unreliable. No one seems too overly concerned about this. My initial effort to get some data from Harlan Ellison on the EC story he wrote resulted only in an unanswsered letter. Ivan Klapper never answered my letter either, assuming it was forwarded to him.

Does Feldstein really believe that the finger did *not* mean "go screw yourself" in the Fifties? It's certainly in that context when seen in one shot of the 1955 film *Battle Cry.* The direct sexual association he refers to (apparently he got a lot of mail) has never been that evident to me in observing the way people use this gesture. And, as used on the magazine, it seemed to be saying either a) *Mad* mag can go screw itself (finger pointed toward logo), or b) if you don't like what we're doing, go screw yourself with a *National Lampoon,* what do we care? At any rate, the *Mad* mail received on this cover must have been something to read, and probably should all be donated to the Kinsey Institute. Even more furor is aroused when the gesture is used by a public figure — Jackie Mason on an early Sixties *Ed Sullivan Show,* and, more recently, Nelson Rockefeller.

I've always found it odd also, along with Reggie Capes, that *Panic* hasn't been reprinted. Actually, *What's My Shine?* is no longer out of date because of the wide circulation of the *Point of Order* film on television and other documentaries featuring excerpts from the McCarthy hearings. How come no mention in Capes' article of all the *Panic* material Jack Mendelsohn wrote? this should be pretty easy to document if someone spoke to Mendelsohn.

No matter how many lists people compile, Jim Harmon is right. Comic books and TV may have flourished between 1949 and 1955 (the Golden Age of television and the EC period of comics), but the Thirties, Forties and earlier were incredibly rich. Comic strips had already peaked and then declined beginning in the Fifties. TV declined beginning in the mid-Fifties. Movie serials vanished in the mid-Fifties. Animated and live-action theatrical shorts were about to fold up. Pulp magazines were through by 1955-56. Movie musicals were falling after the *Singin' in the Rain* and *The Bandwagon* peaks. *There's No Business Like Show Business* indicated that this genre was also going to end with the Fifties. Film noir peaked in the Forties, died in the Fifties. The big bands were a great loss, as any young person can see in *New York, New York.* Live big band music radio remotes were available night after night, all that's left now is the Radiola record. Young people today have no concept of this audio marvel (TV never found an equivalent). Juke boxes were sculptural works of art, not throbbing plastic stereo boxes. Book illustration and revolutionary Welles theatre productions, radio drama and comedy before live audiences, great stage shows between movies. When I was a kid in the Forties I saw live slapstick comedy in a Chicago movie theatre stage show. Theatre organs. Wurlitzer made entire automatic orchestras. Audiences in movie theatres *really sang* together, with and without Fleischer cartoons. Everybody danced. Giant ballrooms. Glossy slick magazines out every week with full color paintings. Stage magicians, hypnotists, tap dancing! Al Jolson sang without amplification because there was no such thing. Ceilings of movie theatres twinkled with artificial stars. Silent movies were shown with live orchestra accompaniment.

Welles, Disney animated features, Busby Berkeley, Parrish, more — talents that were either exhausted, overexposed, rejected or whatever, that just didn't somehow fit in the Fifties. So many things gone, it's impossible to even get the scope of what it was, where it went. When someone starts going on enthusiastically about *Leave It to Beaver,* my mind starts to wander. The Lily Tomlin fans never heard of Ruth Draper, Tomlin's inspiration. Once, around 1961, I managed to see Smith & Dale live

— at a library. It wasn't pathetic at all; instead, two greatly talented guys back in action, being funny the way they had always been. Paperback chains carry Anais Nin's books; Nin herself noted that these books had more meaning when she had printed the original limited editions herself in the basement of the Gotham Book Mart in the Forties. Each book she turned out on the press was an art object. Now, like Harmon says, only money talks — so the fact that Nin herself never wanted to see these books racked in the paperback chains falls on deaf ears. Hardback books were once works of art; today many hardbacks are printed only for libraries and book reviewers.

All beautiful and wondrous things and people from the first half of this century. Today we have only indexers, listers, critic-analysts, burn artists, con artists and ripoff artists, academic rehashers and theses writers — documenting or cashing in on the great, gone pre-1955 things.

Yes, the Fifties gave us Kovacs, EC, Nichols & May, Sid Caesar, Mort Sahl, Lenny Bruce, Harvey Kurtzman, Steve Allen, Rod Steiger as Marty, Kerouac, Kazan, Bob & Ray. But the longer the list gets the more one begins to realize how many names on such a list were underground, suppressed, censored or snuffed or forced to compromise. Home Box Office recently carried an uninterrupted Sahl talkathon at UCLA that was stunning. He's still a great talent, but commercial television has never given him a voice — apparently out of the same fears that kept Bruce off TV. Nostalgia for the Fifties is remembering a few voices that tried to crack through that barrier, mainly with satire. But the real *On the Road* is *Visions of Cody*, and there's no way that Julius and Ethel Rosenberg can sit down and swap memories with Tom Snyder.

William Stout
Hollywood, California

I, too, have always felt that *Panic* has been rather underestimated by the average EC fan and collector. I think the *Panic* vs *Mad* points expressed in "A Time for Panic", though, were stretched and un-necessary with too many "maybe" speculations for comfort.

Also, Al Feldstein shouldn't be given the quantity of credit for *Panic* that the article implies. Bill Elder told me that he wrote several of his own stories for *Panic* and that some of the other artists wrote their own, also. My own personal fave was Elder's "Captain Izzy and Washt Upps" from *Panic* No. 10 with that insanely absurd first panel.

● *Okay, we knew Jack Mendelsohn wrote a lot of* ***Panic*** *and now we know Bill Elder wrote some of* ***Panic,*** *among other artists. Al Feldstein supposedly got the editorship of* ***Mad*** *because of the excellence of his* ***Panic*** *work. But* ***what*** *work? Which ones did he write? Since Feldstein has never received a writing by-line in* ***Mad,*** *it would be interesting to pin-point at least* ***one*** *story completely written by America's most successful humor editor. Will Mr. Feldstein (who complains that EC fans give the artists too much credit) please give himself a little and identify some of his scripts for his fans?* —*Mark*

David J. Bibby
Verona, New Jersey

The Al Feldstein interview was excellent. My only gripe is that it seemed somewhat dry. Was it conducted by mail? While the piece was crammed with all kinds of interesting info, I seemed to miss any insight into the personality of the man. I remember the Alex Toth interview in GSM as an example of an interview that gave the reader a precise idea of the subject, his work, and his approach to life in general. The Feldstein interview was long, but it seemed to me it could have been fleshed out more. I would have enjoyed, for example, some anecdotes of getting people like Bob & Ray, Ernie Kovacs, Jean Shepherd, etc., to do *Mad* pieces. Still, it was a fine piece, and the *Panic* article made a nice follow-up.

The "my nostalgia is better than your nostalgia" tone of Jim Harmon's missive is the most asinine thing I've read in quite some time. If things are going to hell, they've been going to hell for a good long time. But to knock another person's taste in favor of your own just ain't gonna make things any better. When, back in the early sixties, I bought a few of the "Golden Age" comics, I was amazed at just how God-awful so much of it was. We all tend to remember the best of things; that happens to be what makes nostalgia fun and worthwhile for the devotee. Would Jim Harmon say that some of the radio soap operas were as good as "The Shadow"? Some of them may have been, but to cast off entire decades with the notion that "it's not as good as the stuff that was around when I was a boy" smacks of "Creeping Old-Fartism," to paraphrase the aforementioned Jean Shepherd.

Jim Harmon
Los Angeles, California

All criticism, all discussion, all meaningful dialogue involves "knocking another person's tastes", "attacking" his views, challenging his concepts. I plead guilty to all that.

I did not indulge in personalities, such as obliquely calling someone an "Old Fart." That is sinking not to the level of the Fifties (bad enough) but to that of the insult humor of a 1970's TV sitcom (worse).

My central point was to opt for the appreciation of a thing because it is *good* not because it is old and familiar and emotionally comforting. Although I've been writing about nostalgia for years, I've always written against the old-equals-good theory.

I do maintain that a lot of popular entertainment in the Thirties and Forties really was good, and that most of it in the Fifties was not. I realize *Superboy* originated in *More Fun* in 1945 — I remember reading it at that time, and I've had a copy of that magazine for many years; and that *Martin Kane* was a radio-TV show in the late forties — I have a radio tape of that vintage. I think it is a nit-picking cheap shot of Bill Spicer to pontificate on this point, no doubt consulting reference books I helped to write. Obviously and undeniably, these things came to their greatest fame in the Fifties, and are generally associated with that decade. Nick Carter and Frank Merriwell were dime novel characters from the turn of the century, but were also well-known 1940's radio shows. I said nothing to indicate that my examples were *exclusive* to the Fifties.

The reason I chose to select the Fifties as an example of the Bad Old Days is because they are constantly being dwelled upon, because people who are now in their twenties or thirties remember the Fifties as the time of their own childhood. Naturally, everybody remembers their own growing-up time as magical, I suppose even if they grew up during the time of the Black Death.

My point is that one can and has to apply objective standards to art, even popular art. One person's opinion isn't as good as another's, if it is entirely prejudiced and non-objective. I was a teen-ager during part of the Fifties, and liked part of what went on — some of the EC comics and some of the early SF movies of that decade. I didn't like the silly bubble-gum rock of that era, and a lot of other things. For highly personal reasons, I have more sentiment for the things of my childhood, rather than my teen years. Of course, I know all of that wasn't good.

In general, however, the popular art of the Thirties and Forties was better than that of the Fifties, Sixties, Seventies. How does Alex Raymond's *Flash Gordon* compare to the latest Sunday *Spider-Man*? *Maltese Falcon* vs. *Dirty Harry*? John Steinbeck vs. Harold Robbins? I do think our political situation represents some improvement and sophistication over that of any time I can remember, but not our popular entertainment.

So many people don't or can't remember vintage radio, but the comparison with its content and that of TV makes current broadcasting look pathetic. It would take too long to prove that point, but I have to make it — as I have quite a few other times, I admit.

Just for the record, while most radio soap operas were of a demeaning stupidity, a certain few such as *One Man's Family* and *Against the Storm* were artistically superior to *The Shadow* radio program. The fantasy element of *The Shadow* had an irresistible appeal, but a lot of other mystery shows had superior writing,

acting and production — notably *I Love a Mystery, Sam Spade, Inner Sanctum* and *Casey, Crime Photographer.*

Hames Ware
Little rock, Arkansas

Boy, do I sound like a know-it-all when discussing who drew what in the comics. The truth is I'm all too often fishing in a meadow, as we say over to home, and my last letter (*Fanfare* No. 1) is no exception.

There's no doubt I can hold my own when it comes to identifying unsigned art with most anybody (especially the lesser known artists) but the realities of geographic isolation have let me grow lazy with this talent. So I hope Christian Walbo and any others who may read my letters for sources of data will always keep in mind that my eyes deceive me at times and there's enough nearsightedness in my last letter that I can only hope ye editors will give me a chance at 20-20 vision with this current letter.

First off, a statement like "When there's a question as to whether Reed (Crandall) did a story or not, he didn't . . ." is a careless one. What caused me to make a statement like that was that I've always accepted a comment attributed to Crandall that he seldom ever had collaborators. He may never have known who was inking his work, but it's clear toward the end of Quality that a bunch of people collaborated all over his work.

As for issue number one, I thoroughly enjoyed reading about Dick Beals, one of the most believable young voices radio ever had.

Speaking of voices, the new Disney animated film *The Rescuers* is the best vocally-cast Disney film in years — from the singing of Shelby Flint to the sputtering and panting Jim MacDonald created for Evinrude the dragonfly. (By the way, the inclusion of this little fellow, so different from any other Disney character, seems a symbolic nod to the young animators who had more to do with this film than any other in Disney's history.) The casting of Fibber McGee's Jim Jordan as the albatross, Orville, was a stroke of genius. And the voice of the little girl was delightful because it *was* a little girl. I'm aghast at how often TV commercials use dubbed voices of matrons trying to sound like kids!

As for Al Feldstein, those who remember him for his comic book illustration are probably few and far between. All fans can thank goodness his writing and editing skills were recognized and developed and, where those skills are concerned, he'll always be at the top. His artwork is perhaps a different matter. This is purely a personal observation, but I always got the feeling Feldstein could have been a medical illustrator — you know, drawings of forceps, scalpels, etc. He was a classic Iger shop artist, and I only wish interviewer Ed Spiegel had asked about Matt Baker, Ed Waldman, David Heames, Ann Brewster and fellow ECer Jack Kamen who were in that post-war Iger shop working on each other's stuff. Regardless of how one classifies Feldstein's work as an artist it's obvious that, because he *was* an artist, EC was the better for it after he became editor and overseer of his fellow artists. One has only to look at the work for other companies EC artists like Ingels did to know how much Feldstein and Gaines' free-rein but good direction mattered.

Feldstein is quoted as saying "There's certainly something wrong with the adoration given to the artist and the inequity with the writer . . . And I don't understand why." I'm very much aware of the inequity Feldstein speaks of (hence my nod to Roy Thomas last letter). Our mythology is the visual arts and that's why everyone knows who sang "Hound Dog" but few know who wrote it. And the same holds true for our movie mythology. Everyone knows Bogart and Fields but who knows their screen writers or directors? (Hitchcock is among the exceptions — but he certainly has been a visual director always in view himself.) Comic books are at the foot of Mount Olympus, but no less an exception.

I can't quite match Mark Evanier's distaste for the Batman TV show or his effusive praise for the Wonder Woman pilot. The Batman series, whatever its faults, *moved* and in the 1960s it captured the pace of its audience. I felt Cloris Leachman's performance was awful in the TV pilot Mark liked, but I agree with his high score for Lynda Carter. Kathy Lee Crosby wasn't as bad as everyone says, but Lynda Carter was made for the role. The scripts haven't lived up to her promise and instead of coming up with better scripts, the powers that be are updating new shows to take place in the present. Shows taking place in the 1930s and '40s, with some rare exceptions, just aren't making it. *Banyon* was an excellent detective show set in the late '30s and it was canned before most people could discover it.

Your letter column just wouldn't be a letter column without Jim Harmon. He's an asset to any magazine because he manages to say something provocative each time out. This time his main comment is that his nostalgia of the 1930s and '40s is better than others', if your nostalgia is of the '50s or later. I know what Jim is saying, but I feel he's talking about the times the nostalgia is extracted from. All of us as children have been drawn to something — Tom Mix or Captain Midnight, or from a later era, to Elvis or Buddy Holly, or later still to the Beatles or Bionics. To my fellow-letter-column-writer Jim I would say nostalgia of any era can be enjoyed by anyone of that era or any other. Witness Fields, Bogart, the Marx Brothers, Spike Jones, et al, are enjoyed by all ages whether they were contemporary children of those days or not. What I'll grant Jim is that only those people who were around when the nostalgia was in context can feel it completely. And that's not snobbism. For an example, it's fun to be able to sit down in the '70s and listen to a recording of a '40s Shadow radio show — but to feel it completely one would have to have heard it in the circumstances of a '40s Sunday evening with crickets chirping outside the screen door and the attic fan rumbling overhead (before air conditioning caused us to shut ourselves in and others out), flat on our stomachs on the floor reading a Captain Marvel comic during the commercials. To feel that Shadow show nostalgia fully one would have to recreate the lineup that preceded and followed it, resurrect the double bill movies that were playing down the street (the Bowery Boys and a B western, a Three Stooges short, two Warner Bros. cartoons and a serial), and most important, the sense of continuity that could only exist in childhood and perhaps — and this is the only place I might agree with Jim that the '30s and '40s were different — only in the decades before nostalgia *awareness* hit every man, woman and child in this country and the illusion of continuity became impossible.

Every generation's nostalgia is out of context to some degree. For every Fibber McGee & Molly and Vic & Sade there were 10 or 20 clunkers, and that goes for every Captain Marvel, Hopalong Cassidy, Laurel & Hardy, Elvis, Buddy Holly and Star Trek. They are rightfully remembered fondly, but they all rose above the 80% junk. Lest someone think I'm saying only superstars are worthy of nostalgia, let me add there's something to love in almost anything, and that's why arguing whose nostalgia is better is like arguing religion. It's aimless and a waste of energy.

Mike Barrier says I made him aware of some rotten people in comics, and I feel I need to clarify this. In researching for the *Who's Who,* a great number of artists and writers of the 1940s shared bitter memories of seedy fly-by-night people who demanded kick-backs, refused to pay for work rendered, etc. Most individuals were reputable, but a surprisingly large number of creative people who worked in comics hold very bitter memories about the several who weren't.

Landon Chesney's letter posed some penetrating questions and observations and I wish he could be persuaded to carry his thoughts into a feature for *Fanfare.* Should he do this, I would like to add some new perspectives to Landon's on why so many comics people of earlier generations disdain any serious attitudes towards that period of their creative lives. Suffice for now to say it sure is good to see a genius like John Stanley accept at last that fans knew what they were talking about in praising his work on Little Lulu.

Two projects I've had the honor of being associated with should soon be seeing the light of day — *A Complete Checklist of Cartoon Voices* (including all the Disney features, many never listed before) compiled by Graham Webb for the happily resurrected *Funnyworld,* and *A Complete Listing of Comic Strip Credits and Dates, 1935-1975,* compiled by Paul Leiffer for the Museum of Cartoon Art in Connecticut. Both in their own way should be as helpful and worthwhile as the *Who's Who.* Now if only someone would put together a *Who's Who of Animators* from Winsor McCay to Ralph Bakshi, or a similar listing for pulp artists.

● *And so ends our jumbo-size Fanfare Forum letter section for this issue. Send all correspondence for this column to:*

Fanfare Forum
329 North Avenue 66
Los Angeles CA 90042

Leonard Nimoy

Donald Sutherland

when the studio failed to realize they were going to lose their huge potential audience to Fox's *Star Wars.* With some bitterness over the collapse of the *Star Trek* project (since revived, with Robert Wise as director), Kaufman instead joined producer Robert Solo on the pre-production work of *Invasion of the Body Snatchers.*

Paramount's indecisiveness over *Star Trek* also made Leonard Nimoy available. It was first announced that Nimoy would not be in the cast of the new *Star Trek* movie, and he was starring in *Equus* on Broadway when Paramount switched to plans for a new *Star Trek* TV series instead of a theatrical feature. By the time they went back to the original plan for a movie, Nimoy and Paramount were able to negotiate for a recreation of his Spock role. But the start date for the production was now so far away that he was able to join the cast of *Body Snatchers,* playing a psychologist. Before falling victim to the pods he becomes friends with a city health inspector (Donald Sutherland) who manages to survive the pod menace at the end of the film. The offbeat characters essayed by Sutherland in recent years include the title role of Fellini's *Cassanova,* a highly effective voice-over narration as photographer Edward Curtis in the documentary portrait *Shadow Catcher* and his horrific performance as the sadistic Fascist murderer in Bertolucci's *1900.*

The cast members of *Body Snatchers* agreed to do the motion picture without reading the script first, indicative perhaps of the 1956 film's reputation and classic status. Brooke Adams has the female lead, originally acted by Dana Wynter. Veteran of a number of TV roles, Adams recently played opposite Richard Gere in Terrence Malick's *Days of Heaven,* portraying a pre-World War I migrant worker in the Texas Panhandle. Veronica Cartwright, of *The Birds, Inserts* and *Goin' South,* appears in a role paralleling Carolyn Jones' character in the 1956 film. Also in the cast is fast-rising young actor Jeff Goldblum whose previous credits include *Nashville, Annie Hall, Next Stop Greenwich Village,* the disco manager in *Thank God It's Friday,* the rock critic in *Between the Lines* and the illusion-shattering disc jockey in Stephen Poliakoff's underrated play *City Sugar.*

The original *Invasion of the Body Snatchers* was made for $400,000, with only $15,000 of that going for special effects. Although Kaufman describes the new *Body Snatchers* as "not a big special effects movie," about $3,000,000 was spent to realize the production. The climax, with its highly touted shock ending, leaves open the possibility of future sequels. United Artists is releasing, Christmas of 1978. —*Robert Stewart*

Brooke Adams

Veronica Cartwright Jeff Goldblum

Philip Kaufman

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